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A Layman's Confession of Faith

By

P. WHITWELL WILSON

Author of "The Christ We Forget; "The Church We Forget;" "The Vision We Forget," Etc.

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The Statement of the Case

MANY years ago, the late Sir Edward Creasy wrote a book, entitled *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World.* In these pages, I have dealt with fifteen decisive questions of the world. Of every chapter, the title is such a question, and taken as a whole, the answers are a confession of faith.

Every answer has meant a decisive battle in myself. Many a time have I been inclined to drop the subject, to live easily and cheaply amid a fading faith, in which the very twilight would mean a relief from temptation and repentance, and a surrender to the usual cheap and shallow generalities. But I knew that it would be a surrender, that life would be poorer afterwards, and that however lamentable my failure to be a Christian, I should have been a worse failure as a man, had I not tried to be what I might have been.

Merely to be self-deceived, would have been no use to a writer for the press. If I was to have a faith at all, it must be a faith for which, Sunday and weekday, I could give a reasonable explanation. And, after years of delay, I have made time, amid the urgent claims of a busy and uncertain profession, to put the case in brief and simple terms.

If I am under a delusion, then prove it. If there is here no delusion, then I claim the verdict for Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. I know of no person with the Christ who is as unhappy as multitudes of persons who have not the Christ.

They who reduce faith to negatives should read history. Two hundred years ago, many Presbyterian Churches in England became frankly Unitarian and the Lord Shaftesbury of that day scoffed at the Scriptures as "witty and humourous books.' Politics were corrupt. The Prime Minister said that every man had his price. The marriage vow was ignored. And efforts to stop indulgence in liquor failed. Openly it was stated that the Christian Faith had become a thing of the past.

What followed was the unparalleled revival, indeed explosion of faith, under the Wesleys and Whitefield. And the Negatives were positived by Methodism.

One hundred years ago, Unitarianism swept over a New England. And again, the Negatives were positived by explosions of faith, some will say the imperfectly directed faiths of Christian Science and of Mormonism. Some belief—more definite than the Negatives—was essential.

Today again, the Negatives seem to flow like a flood over a submerged faith. But again, the Positives—call them what you like—are exploding. There is Fundamentalism. There is also Spiritual-

ism. And, for the first time in England, there are British Moslems who prefer Mohammedanism with Mohammed to Christianity without Christ. And never has the Church of Rome issued a more triumphant challenge to a wavering Protestantism. In Britain, the two churches that gain ground are the Roman Church and the High Anglican Church.

That there will be definite faiths among men, may be taken for granted. The battle of the Negatives is ever a losing battle. The real danger is not Scepticism but that Scepticism, by destroying a reasonable faith, will provoke Superstition and Sensation. What we need is a clear view of Christ Himself, of what He meant by the Church, the Bible, the Home, the Past and the Future. To see Him in the Scriptures, in events, in others, has been my struggling endeavour. To show Him, is once more my imperfect attempt.

As a servant, I welcome Science; as a master—never. In 1870, there were declared two infallibilities—first, of the Pope, and secondly, of Charles Darwin. Both these infallible authorities were dogmatists. And no Pope was ever a more despotic dogmatist than the zealots of Darwin. For half a century, the Christian who withheld his assent from the proposition that species originated in and were differentiated by natural selection or the survival of the fittest was written down promptly and finally as an obscurantist. The Philosophy of such survival of the fittest made

modern Germany and was the underlying delusion that provoked the war. Today, the infallibilities of Darwin are dismissed by Science herself as no more proven than the theories of Lucretius; and the origin of species is declared—again by Science—to be as mythical as the pedigree of Homer's heroes. These are not the statements of the Church; they are the declarations of the highest authorities on what has been called Evolution.

As long as hypothetical Science consists in the main of unlearning the hypothetical Science of the past generation, I am compelled to suspend my acceptance of theories which have often been no more than intellectual fashions. Revelation, intelligently received, has stood the test of thousands of years. After half a century, Evolution, as promulgated by Science, is on its defence—is indeed confessedly reduced to an indeterminate.

Amid it all, I am glad that I can count on a Friend Who does know and can guide and will preserve to the end that frail and faltering soul which I have committed to His care. To His wisdom, His love and His power, I can assign no limit. And in His teaching, happily, I can find nothing that anybody has ever had to unlearn.

P. W. W.

New York, N. Y.

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I

WHO IS CHRIST?

THOSE of us who desire to follow the Christ in His leadership of love for the human race are told by St. Peter that we should be ever ready to give an answer to any who ask us the reason for the hope that is in us. Even a layman must do his best to fulfil this command, living as he does in an era when the faith of many who profess and call themselves Christians is shaken. I am a plain man who has only one life to live and wants that life to be worth living; and it is for plain men and women that I offer this statement of what I believe. We cannot live our lives in perpetual chaos. We cannot feed our souls on mere argument and controversy. The Gospel is not a theological ball game but redemption. And the best defence of it is simply to know what it means.

For it is not in Christendom alone that religion is challenged. The authority of Moses in the synagogue, of Buddha in the temple, of Mohammed in the mosque and of Confucius in the shrine is also menaced, and throughout the world, an increasing number of people appear to believe in anything or nothing. The question is thus not simply whether

the Christian Faith is to disappear but whether all faith is to be shattered. Is mankind to progress without any appreciation of the Unseen? That is the issue.

At first glance, it seems deplorable that the Church whose "one foundation is Jesus Christ the Lord" should be divided into sects, and that some of the sects should be rent by faction. Where the Holy Spirit should be present in the Church to guide the humble and contrite in heart unto all truth, we see the tenderest mysteries of Our Lord's birth, life and death, debated like politics, one side claiming a victory over the other, as if this were the imitation of Christ. It is not science. It is not orthodoxy. It is not enlightenment. It is the inevitable result of those cares of this world, that deceitfulness of riches which spring up and choke the Word of God. But, after all, as St. Paul realised in his day, the turmoil is not wholly a disaster. What if some do preach Christ of envy and strife? It only means that whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached. "I therein do rejoice," wrote St. Paul, "yea, and will rejoice."

The fact that, one hundred and fifty years after Voltaire, a discussion of the scenes at Bethlehem should occupy more space in the press of the United States than the most sensational of all prize fights shows that the progress of science and the development of railroads, machinery, telegraphs, radio, automobiles have changed in no way the

inescapable fascination of the question, "Whom do men say that I am?" Indeed, it seems as if He were coming to us closer than ever before. Some have accepted Him on the authority of the Church and that was good; others accepted Him on the authority of the Bible and that, perhaps, was better; but best of all will it ever be to find Him ourselves, to see Him as He is, so that if all the Churches were bombed and if all the Bibles were burned, we would still have Him, "nearer than hands and feet." Amid this crisis we are learning that churches and creeds and confessions and catechisms are not enough. To live the Christian life, if that life is to be worth living, must be Christ Himself.

That other prophets than Christ have arisen—prophets widely advertised among intellectuals—I freely admit. As a writer for the newspapers, I do not close my eyes to what is published day by day in this twentieth century. Nor need we be taken by surprise. It is the Bible that forewarned us of what we ought to expect. In the Sermon on the Mount, which we usually take for granted, Our Lord tells us to "beware of false prophets," and it is a hint repeated by His most trusted spokesmen, St. Peter and St. John. The present situation, however difficult it be, ought not to disturb us, therefore; our Master prepared us for it. Nor are we called upon to deny a full hearing to any prophet who tells us that he has something of truth

to declare. There was a moment, doubtless, when St. John as a young man, "a son of thunder," was ready to call down fire from heaven on those who thought amiss, but in his old age he was wiser and wrote that, while we should not "believe every spirit," we should "try the spirits whether they are of God." The most mystical of the Apostles thus asserted not only the right but the duty of applying a private judgment to all the seething speculations of his own day. The Cause was to be defended, not by suppressing attacks upon it, but by examining them. Each criticism of the Christ and each alternative to Him was to be put on trial before a calm and judicial mind and so weighed on its merits. Nothing in science was to be more utterly scientific than the progress and explanation of faith. The Spirit which should rule over such a confession was God; and God was defined as Light, in whom is no darkness at all; as Love, expressed in love for one's neighbour; as Truth, in which can lurk no lie. If we are to see clearly what is given to the world in Christ, we must rid our minds at the outset of all prejudice, all resentment, all desire for a merely dialectical advantage over our neighbours. Even in our creeds, we must be like Him Who was content to be made of no reputation.

Take the modern prophet. He may be Ibsen. He may be Wells. He may be Galsworthy. He may be Gorky or he may be Shaw. Does he, or

does he not, rank with Christ? These prophets have had a publicity that Christ never sought. They have had at their disposal all the resources of the printing press, the theatre, the universities. And they have already failed and the decline of their vogue is evident. The explanation of their failure is simple. All they have been able to do is to diagnose, advertise or ridicule human disease. The remedy is beyond them. Analyse Ibsen's plays. Summed up, they are no more than the exclamation of the Psalmist that all men are liars, and of St. Paul's statement to the Romans that there is none righteous, no, not one. Eliminate the Christ, and you are left with such pessimism, darkly illuminated by satire, by cynicism, and sometimes by the gross sensuality of a Leon Daudet. In this era of education, it is at least one point, now clear, that no other Saviour than Christ can be or has been suggested. It is still Jesus of Nazareth, or nihilism.

Consider this illustration. Two plays have been written on the troublous animosity which too often divides the Jew from the Gentile. The first of these plays is *The Merchant of Venice,* by William Shakespeare. The second is *Loyalties,* by John Galsworthy. In the one case, it was shown that commerce provided no remedy for racial animosity. In the other case, where the Jew was a rich young man introduced into English society, it was made equally evident that pleasure would not

heal the wound. Both Galsworthy and Shakespeare, therefore, left the problem unsolved, not realising any common ground where there would be neither Jew nor Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free. In Christ, such reconciliation is possible. And why? Because Christ is greater than commerce and pleasure; He is incarnate service. It is in serving mankind that the opposites in opinion and blood are drawn together. If Shylock and the Venetians had served together on the committee of a hospital where Jews and Catholics were treated by Catholic and Jewish doctors and nurses, the world would have heard nothing of that pound of flesh. The racial problem would have been solved.

We have no reason, then, to fear the study of comparative religion. That study did not begin in theological colleges, however modern, but on the Mount of Transfiguration where Jesus, with Moses and Elijah, together compared religion. By all means, let Buddha, let Mohammed, let Confucius, let Tolstoy, let Gandhi, join that company and talk face to face with Christ. For the moment, the Godhead may seem to be enveloped in a cloud of a divine uncertainty, but in due course, we shall again see Jesus only; and matched with Him, the rest are nowhere. Suppose it be true that Christ is belittled—that He is a stone set at nought of the builders—the statesmen, the thinkers, the scientists, who construct the civilisation

that is not wholly a success. The fact remains that "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." It was said by Peter and John nineteen centuries ago. And it is still to be said today by anyone who reads the newspapers. If you are satisfied with cynicism, with pessimism, with sensation, with pleasure, you may obtain these from others than Christ, but if you are in pursuit of that something further which He called heaven and we call happiness, an inward peace which passeth understanding and a life more abundant than sophistication, it is to Christ alone that, after all experiment, you must resort. No one else even pretends to offer so great a salvation.

At the outset, then, our enquiry is much simplified. We need not consider anyone but Christ. With Him stands or falls the good in all others, and by Him, all others should be tested. "Whom do men say that I am?" is thus the eternal question, and to this question He explained to us that different answers would be given. Some would see in Christ the prophet or teacher. Others would see in Him the righteous man or example. Their belief is that Christ as example may still be a man, a mere man, a good man, doubtless the best of men; indeed, the perfect man. This is the Christ of the man who cannot accept His "full-orbed" Divinity. As He foresaw other things, so did He foresee the faith of a Martineau and an

Emerson—of those "Liberals" who discover in Christ simply a Judaic Rabbi—and of Renan and numerous biographers of Jesus who belong to his school.

And as He loved all men, so did He love such men. As He was fair to all men, so was He fair to the man who said that, despite His claims, He was only man. He did not send him to hell. He did not refuse to eat with him; from Simon the Pharisee who entertained Him merely as a man, He asked no more than the usual courtesies extended to a human guest, that His feet be washed and His head anointed with oil. Indeed, He expressly stated that anyone receiving a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall have the prophet's reward,—no more, no less. And anyone receiving a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall have a righteous man's reward—no more and no less. To such an one, therefore, whatever he may call himself and in whatever church he may be found, Christ offers all that the believer will accept. But He also makes it plain that whosoever receives Him without such reservations will receive the God Who sent Him; in other words, that the riches of Christ are unsearchable. According to your faith, then, will it be unto you. He does not force you to believe on Him, but He makes it clear that you cannot believe on Him too much. What He can do for you is a bank that you cannot break. And they who limit the Christ

are thus writing down their own assets. They are impoverishing their higher life.

For what is faith? It is not a theory. It is not a proof. It is defined in the Epistle to the Hebrews as "seeing the invisible." In other words, faith is eyesight. And sight is instantaneous. You see a thing or you do not see it; that is the question. What I see of this sheet of paper is not a matter of argument. The paper is here and so am I and I see the paper. Similarly, Christ is here and so am I and I see the Christ. That is faith.

Imagine a portrait on your wall. A man comes into your room and tells you that he cannot see it. You then know that he is blind. Another man comes in and says that it is a beautiful study in sepia. You then know that he is colour-blind. He can distinguish between the light and the shade but he cannot see the rainbow. A third man comes in and admires the blue of a feather and the red of a ruby and you know that he has normal eyesight. And a fourth man distinguishes the colours, even when they are intermingled, discovering exquisite trinities of radiance, and in him you have the artist. So with the knowledge of Christ. Some see Him not at all. Others only see Him in monochrome, a man, unadorned by divinity. Others again recognise the divinity but describe it in crude terms. And there are a few who can perceive the very strokes of the Supreme Artist

and can define the Christ in His fullness, as did Paul, fathoming subtleties of significance of which the rest of us are unconscious. Such are the saints and the mystics who sometimes frame the creeds and sing us our hymns.

It is with Christ as with music. Some are deaf and hear it not at all. Others hear a noise only and cannot tell the tune. They are not deaf but only tone deaf. Others again can tell the tune but are unable to write it into notes. They are like the Christians who worship Christ but have no use for dogmas. And there are a few who can distinguish concurrent melodies and analyse harmonies, finding in them not music alone but language, and these again are the mystics and saints who can put the Christ into words. It is no use arguing with a man who is blind or deaf. It is absurd to persecute him. If he has neither sight nor hearing, there is surely a language that he will understand and that language is touch. When words fail, try deeds. In the mediæval era, the deed was persecution. The heretic was tortured and burned. When Jesus was arrested and Peter with his sword smote off the ear of the High Priest's servant, Malchus, Our Lord's touch healed the ear and His saying as they bound Him, "Suffer ye thus far," was in its exquisite irony, perhaps the most unanswerable proof of the authentic miracle. For no one could have invented at once that human word and that divine deed. Our

neighbours may seem to be unable to hear what, as we think, Christ is saying, or to see what, as we think, He is doing, but they can feel; they have sinned and need pardon; in sympathy, in service, in sacrifice, we can still show them the Christ.

II

WHAT IS A CHURCH?

IF I am asked to what Church I belong, I hardly know what to reply. In one sense, I belong to no Church; in another sense, I belong to every Church. Terms like Catholic, Protestant, Methodist, Baptist and so on, mean little to me for I find none of them in the New Testament. In the days of the Apostles, there was no Church except the Church of Christ, and how to find that Church was simple. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name," said Our Lord, "there am I in the midst." Whenever and wherever we meet and think of Him, there is He with us, a present Friend. With the disciples thus awaiting Him at Jerusalem, the tomb itself could not shut Him in, and the closed door of the upper room could not shut Him out. Doubtless it was miracle, but the miracle was a higher law. Amid the forces of nature, His love was an omnipotent force. It was God Himself for God is Love. And this is the reason why St. Paul declares to us "that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth nor any other creature shall be

able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Mankind is gregarious. We have our clubs and colleges and trade unions; and Christ also is hospitable. He brings us into His banqueting house and His banner over us is love. His spiritual fellowship can never be shattered or shaken. While the shells of modern science burst over the ancient cathedrals of faith, the Church was discovered in the unconsecrated timbers of a "Y" hut. In no plainer characters could its charter be engrossed than these—that it is the presence of Christ among men. To those who question His birth, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, He comes with the simple request that at least His presence be admitted amongst us. He stands at the door and knocks.

Hence one may find Him with equal certainty in a meeting of Quakers where is silence, or at a Roman Catholic altar where is ceremony, or in a Presbyterian Church where is a sermon. It is not the silence, it is not the ceremony, it is not the sermon that draws the Christ, but the congregation. What that congregation believes about baptism or the apostolic succession or even about the mystery of Christ's own Person, does not alter His love. One might compare a church with a hospital, where are assembled all sorts and conditions of men and women who are drawn together, not by affection for one another, not by a common opinion, but by

a common need of, and trust in, a great physician. Such a physician does not distinguish between His patients—saying to this one that he is too unsound of doctrine to be welcome and to that one that he has sinned too deeply in his life. No. "Him that cometh unto me," says He, "I will in no wise cast out." The mistake made by Roman Catholics does not consist in asserting too strongly the Real Presence of Christ in their worship. He *is* there present. Where the Catholic goes wrong is in denying Christ's presence in other Churches than his own. It is not that the Roman Christ is too great; He is not as great as the Christ universal.

Hence, to those who argue over the Christ of yesterday and to those who contend earnestly for the Christ of tomorrow, I suggest that, first of all, they should make sure of the Christ of today. Inevitably, the Christ of yesterday recedes into the distance of passing time. And over the Christ of tomorrow, there are also differences, for the Christ of tomorrow has not yet appeared. Over history and over prophecy, therefore, we argue and sometimes go so far as to quarrel, but over worship and duty, we are able to agree; for in worship and duty we meet no distant Christ who was once, or will be sometime, but the Christ Who is, here and now. In the New Testament, therefore, the presence of Christ dissolved at once all doubts and all distinctions. Simon Zelotes became more than a religious zealot, and Peter, the fisherman, became a fisher of

men. We should therefore avoid these labels—modernist, fundamentalist, premillenialist—each of which emphasises one, and only one, aspect of truth. Doubtless we should be up-to-date. Doubtless our foundations should be sure. And doubtless we have a living hope of His return amongst us.

But Christ is all these things and more than all. And in the New Testament, I can find—within the Early Church—a mention of only one label—the Nicolaitines, who flourished in the congregation of Pergamos. St. John tells us that the Nicolaitines had a doctrine, and it is, perhaps, strange that no one has discovered what that doctrine was. It may have been conservative; it may have been liberal; it may have been orthodox, it may have been latitudinarian; but in any event, God hated it. And why? Because it was Nicolaitine. It was of Nicolas and not of Christ. Whatever of truth there was in it and whatever of falsity, it obscured the Redeemer. Nicolas? Who was Nicolas? Was Nicolas crucified for Pergamos? Even Paul protests that he, the Apostle to the Gentiles, was not so crucified for Corinth. Here was the majesty of the Saviour, thrown, as it were, on the screen by the light of God's Spirit, and suddenly Nicolas pokes his head into the field of illumination and casts his own black shadow on to the Countenance Divine. Nicolas is the eternal symbol of controversial egotism—the big "I" instead of the Great Himself.

It is indeed worth remembering that the followers of Christ themselves were not called Christians until, years after the Ascension, they reached Antioch. At the Jordan, where Christ was baptised, on the Mount where He was transfigured, in the Garden where He was tempted, near the Cross where He died and before the Tomb where He rose from the dead, His friends were content to be His "disciples"—people taught by Him—and His "apostles"—people sent by Him. It was the world that insisted on their assuming the name of a sect, like the Stoics, the Epicureans and the Agnostics. And it is the mistake that the world has always made. Where Christ says "all ye are brethren," the world replies that some must be rich and others poor; some are French and others German; some are black and others white; some are sound in faith and others unsound, all of which means that the goodwill of Christ is frustrated by human frontiers, that will have to be broken down.

For we make His love too narrow
By false limits of our own,
And we magnify His strictness
With a zeal He will not own.

In Turkey—to give one instance—it is remarkable that while Armenian Christians are massacred and Greek Christians deported, American Christians are welcomed. And why? Because the Greeks and the Armenians fought their battle for

Christ with creeds and with labels and with ceremonies—fought it heroically and to the death—whereas Americans fought the same battle for Christ with colleges and hospitals and schools, letting their service fall, like the rain from heaven, on Moslem and Christian alike. And the result is that we are beginning to see a new idea of conversion to Christ. Our missionaries are less inclined than they were to compass sea and land to make one proselyte who shall be labelled a Christian, and aim rather at offering Christ to the Moslem, as a Moslem, to the Buddhist, as a Buddhist, to the Jew, as a Jew. Christ did not destroy the religion of His own people but fulfilled it. And as He fulfilled the Hebrew faith, so does He fulfil all faiths, purging them of the wrong and perfecting them in the right. The Christian whose background is Moses, or Buddha, or Confucius, or Mohammed, will not be the same as we whose background was Wodin and Thor.

Then the manner of worship in church makes no difference? I do not say so. Everything that is different from anything else makes a difference. There was once a brilliant architect who designed a beautiful church which had but one fault, namely, that you could not hear what was said from the pulpit. That was doubtless merely a detail, but it was an important detail, for a congregation cannot receive a Gospel which they do not hear. Similarly, I entered a church the other day because I

wanted to find a place where I might read a few verses from the Bible. It was a beautiful church, like the other, and again, it had but one fault, namely, that you could not see to read in it. It was all that it ought to be, except that it was devoid of light. In order to read the Bible, I found that I had to keep outside that church. The ceremonies, the organisation, the creeds, the music, the sacraments, the sermons, the Sunday Schools, the religious orders—everything about a church —should be subjected to this one test, namely, whether thereby the Christ is revealed or obscured. That, and that alone, is what matters. In every act of worship, of teaching, of social service, the aim should be to set forth the Redeemer to those who have yet to know Him more perfectly.

We are too ready to suppose that the cause of Christ is to be advanced by the scrutiny of manuscripts and by learned discourses and abstruse metaphysics. There are preachers who think that when they use the word "Christocentric," they have said a bigger and newer thing than St. John said when he told us of Christ being in our midst. Words like Christology and "Christocentric" are mere pedantic paraphrases for the splendid simplicity of a Bible, expressed for the most part in vivid Saxon. "Are you a premillenialist?" I am asked, and I answer, "I cannot understand such long words. I am merely a one-syllable Christian." I remember well that, at the outbreak of

the war, there arose in the British Parliament the question what would be the best design for the new paper money. And some people suggested a design so complicated that nobody would be able to forge a counterfeit. Mr. Lloyd George, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer, then stated that according to the experience of the Bank of England, the simplest signature on a note was the hardest to imitate. It is the simple Christ Who must be genuine.

The presence of Christ is thus what makes the difference between the Christian Church and either the Mosque or the Synagogue. It may be true that their windows are open to the plain light of a distant Deity, whose truth and justice and power shine cold upon the worshippers. The windows of a Christian Church are, however, illuminated forever with the Supreme Figure of the Founder, accompanied by His saints, apostles, and martyrs. In the morning, as the sun shines into the church, the faithful see Him, and are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. In the evening, as the inner light of the Church shines forth into the darkness, the world sees Him and that same great cloud of witnesses. The Christ that the Church sees and worships, is the Christ that the Church shows. If the pattern of the window be unduly elaborated, if it be overloaded with ornament, if it be crowded with detail, then, the Christ may be lost in the design, or His Being may be cramped

into angular and impotent attitudes. To clear away whatever complicates His simple love and His simple power, is thus the frequently recurring task of those who wish to be His witnesses. The artist painting a portrait does not study optics. He looks earnestly at the face.

III

WHY READ THE BIBLE?

ABOUT the Bible, there is this advantage, that whether we go to church or not, we can carry it with us everywhere and make it our constant companion. If, then, we neglect the Bible, the responsibility for so doing is entirely our own. That the Bible is so neglected, cannot be denied. Most of us are too busy with other matters to find time to read the Bible and we are content, therefore, with the verses which the minister still includes in "the preliminaries," as they are called, of public worship. What has alienated us from the Bible is not an intellectual difficulty over its contents but the paramount claim of the automobile, the country club, and the making of money to pay for these things.

We are content, therefore, with an easier literature and are much relieved in our minds when learned or pretentious persons tell us that the Bible has ceased to be trustworthy; is full of errors; and may now be discarded. That comforting theory sets us free for golf on Sunday; and, as we tramp around the links, we thoroughly approve of the latest scholarship. We need not learn the Bible

any longer for ourselves, and we need not teach the Bible any longer to others. It is a most happy release from reverence to God and service to man. And the sequel for society—for the nation—for mankind? One wonders!

It is possible that, in this mood, we underestimate the Bible. Far be it from me to deal hastily with anyone who is troubled with doubts, but life is really too short for time to be wasted on what the Psalmist calls "the fool" who cannot or will not admit that the Bible is unique. That the Bible stands alone among books, is common ground with everybody who is anybody, and it is merely in passing, therefore, that one mentions one or two illustrative facts.

A hundred and fifty years ago, there was the French Revolution and an outburst of Rationalism. Immediately there arose, for the first time, the Bible Societies which translated this obsolete volume into every language, whether written or unwritten, on the face of the earth; and momentous have been the results. In India and the East, the Bible is more read than any other book ever has been or ever will be; China alone has absorbed ninety million copies. Gandhi, the mystic, and Sun-Yat-Sen, the statesman, are both of them readers of the Bible. In earlier days, there may have been a time when, in English-speaking countries, a ruler could afford to be ignorant of the Bible, but with the progress of enlightenment, the Bible has

become an essential, at any rate, in the English-speaking world. All recent Prime Ministers in Britain—Gladstone, Rosebery, Salisbury, Balfour, Asquith, Lloyd George, Bonar Law, and Baldwin have been men of the Bible, and every recent American President—McKinley, Taft, Roosevelt, Wilson, Harding and Coolidge—has taken good care to be acquainted with the volume on which he swears his loyalty to the United States. When H. G. Wells proposes to compile a new Bible, a popular magazine manages to market the idea for precisely one month, but during that very month, the circulation of the old Bible exceeds that of the popular magazine. Then we have Conan Doyle suggesting a Bible without the Old Testament, which idea also lasts for one month, only to be followed by De Mille's great film, *The Ten Commandments.* And when someone organises a debate on the Inspiration of the Bible, the newspapers report it and the radio broadcasts it as fully as the most sensational of international prize fights.

In every generation, there are similar evidences to the ineradicable fascination of the Bible. Scholars slay the Book but it rises from the dead. And from all this it follows that the question to be answered on the Bible is essentially the same question that we must answer on Christ. Beyond dispute, He was the best Man, and beyond dispute, this is the best Book. Then was the best Man, and is the best Book merely human or also divine? Is

the Bible and is the Christ to be accepted as the Word of God? Was the Man God incarnate? Was the Book divinely inspired? That, in plain terms, is the issue.

To this question on the Bible, three answers have been given. First: there are those who value the Bible as a supreme literature, inspired by genius as other great literature is inspired; and that is so far, so good. Secondly: there are those who find the Bible to be more than other literature, however noble it be, and declare that the Bible contains the Word of God. And that goes further and is better. Thirdly, and my own belief is: that the Bible, consisting of sixty-six books written during fifteen centuries or more, and moulded and selected by the inspired piety of fifty generations of worshipful people, is now to be trusted, for life here and hereafter, as wholly and in all its parts, the revelation of God to man, of man to himself and of the universe to us who dwell within it. It was in that belief that they to whom I owe my being lived and died, leaving an example of faith and duty which I find to be indeed rare, and I have proved that belief myself by seeking in vain for any passage in the Bible which fails to yield an abundant harvest, in mental stimulus, moral encouragement or spiritual satisfaction, for whatever time and thought I may have devoted to it.

The difficulties in the Bible, as they are called, fall under three heads, first: the miracles; secondly:

the mistakes; thirdly: the lapses in ethics. For the man who regards the Bible merely as literature, none of these offer any perplexity because he takes the Bible no more seriously than he takes his Homer or his Shakespeare. For the man who says that the Bible contains the Word of God, the difficulties are, again, simplified because whenever he encounters one, he can say that the passage in question is not part of God's Word to him. If, then, you wish to skim the surface of life instead of soaring to its heights and peering into its depths, you can adopt a theory of the Bible which will enable you to enjoy much of the Scripture without troubling about the rest. Indeed, it is an abundant banquet that this Book provides, and no one, living or dead, has yet exhausted that illimitable and varied "bread of life." Even for him who wishes to run as he reads, there is offered a choice of food. The fact that somebody announces a mistake in ethics in Exodus does not affect the Twenty-third Psalm. And the fate of the Gadarene swine need not cancel the Sermon on the Mount. The Bible is like a tree which grew with the centuries, reaching forth its branches to greet God's sun. Pick the fruit, then, which is nearest to hand. And, for the moment, do not worry about that which seems to be beyond your reach. When you have made that part of the Bible which you can understand and enjoy your own, then it will be time enough to consider the rest.

If, however, I am not myself content with selected passages from the Bible, the reason is, first and foremost, that in this matter, I must give due weight to the example of Jesus who accepted His Bible as a whole. Our Lord lived in an era when the best in Greek and Roman literature was available. And yet His perfect character was nourished entirely on the Old Testament which was His only library. In the prophecies of Isaiah, He heard the call to His public career. In the law of Moses, He found His defence against the Tempter. In the Book of Jonah, and indeed in Jonah's whale itself, He discovered the sign of His resurrection. And in the Sermon on the Mount, there is not an idea which you may not trace to those ancient Hebrew Scriptures. When Our Lord talked with His friends, He did not enter into bitter argument over the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. What He said was, "Search the Scriptures." "Have ye never read," He would ask, "what David did?" Did they not remember that in the beginning God created them male and female? If only they had known what was read to them on the Sabbath day, they would have understood the Christ. It was not their opinions of the Bible that He condemned but their ignorance of its pages. And this is the ignorance that confronts us today.

At the University of Cambridge when I was an undergraduate, a number of us met every week to read the Bible itself. All forms of faith and of

doubt and of denial, then current, were to be found in this little company, but whether we accepted or criticised or rejected the Gospel of St. John, we did at least know what it contained. We concealed neither our dogmas nor our heresies. And an open Bible, openly discussed, was thus a part of what has been called a liberal education. At Toynbee Hall, in East London, I have spent many an evening around the fireside, talking over the problems of life with men drawn from Eastern Europe and elsewhere, whose knowledge of English was imperfect and, in every such discussion, it made all the difference that I was able to quote the Bible. For twenty years in England, my Sundays were devoted to teaching or addressing audiences of working men—for the most part, actual trade unionists—and, again, what I gave them was simply the Bible. Anyone who masters any part of the Bible for himself has something of value to share with others.

What Our Lord said to the lawyer was not "how does your rabbi or clergyman read the Bible?" but "how readest *thou?*" He asks us to give Him our own first-hand opinion of Scripture and not what somebody else has told us to believe. Indeed, He bade us "take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." The Pharisees were the fundamentalists of that day who wore phylacteries in which every syllable of the Scriptures was held to be sacred; who yet con-

fined their attention to such favourite texts, so ignoring the social and industrial message of Scripture and overlooking that command to love one another which Paul put before prophecy and even before faith and hope. On the other hand, the Sadducees were modernists who taught that, according to the latest results of Greek philosophy, there was "no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit." To both these groups Christ declared that, by their tradition, they made the law of God to be of none effect. In obedience to Christ, therefore, I read the Bible with my own eyes, refusing to wear either the spectacles or the blinkers offered by scholars, critics and popular novelists.

For consider the fundamentalist attitude. Not long ago, I read for myself the Book of Revelation. I was amazed by what seemed to me to be its modern significance. There was not a verse that I did not find in the newspapers. And I wrote a book to this effect. A friend told me that I must not expect any wide circulation for this volume. "The Premillenialists," said he, "will not read it because your phrases are not theirs, and others will not read it because they are afraid of the controversies of the Premillenialists." In other words, the Christian Church leaves the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse to Ibañez who uses the image for what has been the most widely distributed novel and the most widely attended motion picture of our time. The Pharisees, on the one hand, and the Sadducees,

on the other, have closed a book of vision which inspired Dante, the greatest poet of Italy, Milton, the greatest poet of England, Isaac Newton, the greatest of England's scientists, and Michael Angelo, who was among the greatest of artists. It is, indeed, lamentable that in a highly civilised land where there is supposed to be the latest improvement in schools and colleges, generations should enter mature life without any appreciation of the most radiant symbolism which has ever illuminated the genius of our race.

At school and the university, I studied mathematics and *only* mathematics, for seven years. It was a narrow and an intensive curriculum which, however, did at least impress on the mind what is meant by a proof. After that stern discipline, I confess that I have been amazed by some at least of the flimsy deductions of the more pretentious scholarship. Because some German says a thing, it is supposed to be so. But there is no mind less reliable on such deduction than the German mind. I well remember meeting Professor Masaryk, as he then was, who is now President of Czecho-Slovakia. He advanced the belief that Britain is a Protectionist country and I asked him how he could have arrived at any such conclusion? His answer was that he had made a close study of British finance, as set forth by the most authoritative German economists.

Now here was a man of genuine learning who

had been taught by German professors the precise reverse of the plain facts. During the war, what was essentially the same dossier of diplomatic documents—everyone of them admittedly genuine—was examined by theological experts, first in Germany, then in Britain. And on those documents, the experts delivered diametrically opposite judgments. There is a scholarship that adds definitely to ascertained knowledge. Such scholarship should be welcomed, and there is nothing to be feared from it. But when the scholar theorises, he has no more authority than the layman who theorises. And as a science, the theories of scholarship vary with every decade and could not well be less exactly ascertained. There is nothing for the layman to do but take the Bible afresh, forget the critics and the critics of the critics, and read the Book for himself.

The other day, I talked with a Sunday school teacher who had perused *The Outline of History,* by H. G. Wells, and—so he explained—had derived from it one great thought, namely, that Paul made it his task to reduce Christ to a system of theology. I asked him whether he or Wells had seriously read St. Paul's Epistles? He confessed that he had not, and that he could give no guarantee for Wells. I then told him that the impression which I had derived from those Epistles was that Paul was anxious to do the exact opposite of what he said that Wells suggested; that he set himself

not to bind Christ by dogmas but to liberate Him from dogmas; that this was the reason of His controversies with the Jewish Christians and of the more passionate quarrel with the Jews who were not Christians; and that for this reason He was arrested and ultimately lost his life. I do not ask others to agree wtih my view, as thus stated, or to disagree with the other view, but it is obvious that what I have found in St. Paul is not what my friend found in H. G. Wells.

The Outline of History was widely circulated. It was bold and it was interesting, and it shook the faith of many. But already there are hints that it is far from reliable. I did, however, refresh my memory of the few pages which Wells is able to spare for what he considers to be that comparatively trifling phenomenon called Christianity. He advances the view that our faith was developed from the cult of Serapis-Isis-Horus on the Nile, and that the redemption of the world originated, not on the Cross of Calvary, but in the Temple of Karnak. When Isaac Watts wrote his hymn about "the fountain filled with blood," he was subconsciously perpetuating the rites of Mithraism. About this thesis, thus advanced with an immense show of spectacular erudition, what I would say is, that everyone knows that between all religions, there are certain correspondences. Everyone is influenced by everything, and everything is influenced by everything and everybody else. In that

general sense, I am writing these words under the subtle telepathy of the Grand Llama of Tibet.

But when we leave hypotheses behind and come down to facts, we find that Paul was not a Greek or a Hellene, born or bred at Alexandria, but a Jew of the Jews, born at Tarsus and educated at Jerusalem in the strictest sect of the Pharisees; that so far as we have any record, he never visited Egypt at all, and that in no reported writing or saying of his does he once mention Egypt; that after his conversion, he retired alone not to Egypt but to Arabia; and that while he met Apollos from Alexandria, it was only after his views had been matured; and what happened was that he had to explain to Apollos, who only knew the Baptism of John, the very fulness of Christ's gospel, including the gift of the Holy Spirit, which, apparently, Apollos ought to have learned at Karnak.

When therefore I am offered as "history" the substitution of Karnak for Calvary or the addition of Karnak to Calvary, I take the precaution to verify the other man's quotations. What he tells me about the Bible is not a sufficient substitute for the Bible itself.

IV

IS THE BIBLE INSPIRED?

IN a previous chapter, I have admitted frankly that there are hard places in the Bible. I said that these difficulties might be divided into three classes, first: the miracles; secondly: the alleged mistakes; thirdly: the alleged lapses from ethics and morality. On the miracles, I will say a word at a later stage. Here it is enough to remark that if they occurred, the Scriptures would not have been a witness of truth, had they omitted the facts merely because the facts were unusual. The report of a miracle is only an error if the miracle did not happen. If the miracle did happen, to report it is a duty to science as science dawns from day to day.

As to the "errors" of fact and morals, let us realise at the outset that there are two kinds of Bible. First, we have sacred volumes like the Maxims of Confucius, the Koran and the Book of Mormon which were offered to the faithful as they stand—every colon exact and unalterable as the Constitution of the United States of America. These bibles have had great influence, but the trouble with them is that we must accept them without question or reservation. They do not per-

suade or convince; they command; and the religion or life, sustained on such diet, is static. It lacks initiative. The reason is suspended and atrophied. In the words of St. Paul, "the letter killeth."

The Jewish Bible was not written, therefore, all at once or once for all. In it, we have a nation, thinking aloud. And no nation, thus thinking aloud, thinks only of God or of good or of truth or of right. The very inspiration of the Bible consists in the ruthless candour with which man is there able to hold the mirror of truth to his own face. A king and Oriental autocrat like David sins with Bathsheba, and in the Bible we can read perhaps the only Court Circular, ever issued, which states the scandal as it happened, that informs the world that the next king, Solomon, is the son of an adulteress. If then a society which sustains one divorce for every ten marriages turns shy at such plain speaking, the reason may not be wholly discreditable to the Bible. When a poet, carried captive into exile, is moved to hatred of his Babylonian oppressor, no censor stays his imprecatory pen as he prays that the babes be dashed against the stones. He is the Maeterlinck who refuses to assist the German intellectuals, or the Belgian diplomat who declines to accompany a German into the President's dining room, or the French Prime Minister who cannot bring himself to discuss reparations. The landscape enervates which is all green pastures and still waters. In the Bible, he

who has the courage is invited " o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till the night is gone." He is confronted by a scenery of wild and impressive grandeur. Life is not easy and the Bible would not be the Book of Life if it were free from obstacles.

It is thus the peculiar merit of the Bible that it challenges enquiry, it provokes doubt, it disturbs a too placid faith, it forces us to face the riddle of our existence. We criticise; we question; we repudiate; but we are gripped. The Bible is like some inescapable drama. We cannot explain Hamlet but we cannot avoid seeing him.

It is the Bible, therefore, beyond all other literatures that has moved the archæologist to unveil the past. It is in the holy lands, as they are called, that the origins of history have been first uncovered. Inspiration is thus two-fold. The Scriptures are inspired and the Scriptures also inspire. You cannot enter a museum, you cannot walk through a gallery of pictures, you cannot collect tapestries or admire carvings, you cannot study architecture, history, or poetry, and you cannot stroll by mountain, stream or forest without losing some measure of appreciation unless the Bible be the background of the brain.

The Bible is a book, therefore, that demands and evokes from the reader the highest intelligence. It is intended, not to dispense with the mind but to be a gymnastic for the mind. So exacting is the standard of common sense required by Scripture

that in the opinion of the Roman Catholic Church, the individual cannot be trusted, of himself, to interpret the Bible. Among Protestants, the reading of the Bible is or ought to be assisted by an humble dependence on God's Holy Spirit. The proud man, whose will has never been surrendered to what is higher than himself, will stumble and complain as he treads this hard and upward path. But the reverent man, as he climbs, will breathe an invigorating air and his eye will be satisfied by an ever extending prospect. Some of the difficulties found in the Bible are the fault of the reader.

Many of such "hard places" have been long familiar to students. But I am writing also for laymen to whom these alleged discrepancies are offered constantly as arguments against the Bible, and a few illustrations may be useful as showing how one reader of the Scriptures, at any rate, approaches these passages. It is, perhaps, only by definite examples that the general argument can be made clear.

We are told that the four Evangelists give four versions of what Pilate wrote over the crucified Christ, namely:

Matthew—"This is Jesus the King of the Jews."

Mark—"The King of the Jews."

Luke—"This is the King of the Jews."

John—"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Apparently, it is forgotten that the inscription

was written in three languages, Hebrew, Greek and Latin, which circumstance, in itself, disposes of the point raised. But that is not all. The very fact that the inscription is thus quoted with slight and immaterial variation is enough to indicate to any judge in a court of law that there were four witnesses of the crucifixion who reported independently and without collusion, and not only one witness. And this means that there was a fourfold witness of the resurrection. It is thus unsafe to assume that an apparent discrepancy weakens the evidences of Scripture. It may multiply its reliability many times.

Similarly, with the varying accounts of St. Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. Here also was an event involving the deepest and most sudden emotions. And Paul described it under conditions of severe oratorical stress. The fact that he and his friends told what they saw and what they heard, without premeditation and conspiracy to deceive, would be far more convincing to a lawyer trained in the validity of evidence than a cooked up story in which, as Lord Melbourne said to his cabinet, the rule was, "Gentlemen, it does not matter what we say, provided that we all say the same thing." One account states that the bystanders heard the voice. Another account states that they "heard not the voice that spake." It is a fair assumption that the bystanders heard the voice but could not distinguish the words. And a single

question from a cross-examining attorney would have elicited, probably, that solution from the witnesses.

Take another case. In II Samuel vi: 23, we are told that "Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child unto the day of her death"; whereas, in II Samuel xxi: 8, we read that Michal, the daughter of Saul, had five sons. An "error" and a most instructive error. How is it explained? In the second passage, a certain Adriel is mentioned as the father of those five sons. Now Adriel was husband, not of Michal, but of her sister, Merab. And it is plain that in this case the pen of a copyist slipped, from which apparent mishap we learn this astonishing fact that the Bible is the only book in which a remote and trifling error by some weary scribe of thousands of years ago assumes an importance that in the twentieth century, requires its public discussion in the greatest and richest city ever built, a discussion broadcast for millions by radio—printed for millions in the secular press—and calculated to mark an epoch in the spiritual evolution of the race.

If you had sought an argument for literal inspiration, you could not have found one more powerful and dramatic. For here we see the eternal significance of what our Lord called each jot and each tittle. And what has been the result of such "errors"? They have drawn the finest brains to the task of textual compilation of the Bible and

today there is no book, ancient or modern, in which the original versions have been examined with a care approaching that which has been devoted to the Scriptures. In the present instance, we can almost certainly restore the original and true script by correcting " Michal " to " Merab."

Another " mistake " in the Bible is only mentioned here because it has been seriously insisted upon by " scholars." We are told that in Genesis a serpent is said to eat dust whereas serpents don't eat dust! As a matter of fact, there is a much worse " mistake " than that, for Isaiah talks about kings and queens licking the dust, which is not a habit of queens and kings. Indeed, few of us reporters describe a prize fight without saying that one or other combatant bites the dust. And this again is not a custom of prize fighters.

There is not a literature, anywhere, that does not employ metaphor, and the metaphors of the Bible are supreme. This of the serpent eating dust is one of them. It means that evil feeds on that which dies—the passions, the lies, the lusts, which are carnal—the dust and not the soul.

That the Jews exceeded their contemporaries in an accurate observation and love of nature, is admitted by all whose opinion counts. The Bible has been the inspiration of Natural History and only in lands where it is read, have we great collections of such objects and animals. But it is, none the less, objected that in Leviticus xi:6, the hare is

said to chew the cud, whereas the hare does not chew the cud but only makes motions with his lips that might indicate this habit. Here, again, is a perplexity that instructs. The Jews decided to live on a selected diet. And there is not a doctor, today, who will deny that they were right. Leaving Egypt, they saw the hare. It seemed to fall into the class of unclean animals. And they took no risks. In the words of St. Paul, they "abstained from all appearance of evil." They were careful to err, if at all, on the right side—an example not wholly without value in days when Prohibition is under enforcement.

So with the statement in Leviticus that grasshoppers, crickets and locusts have four feet. If anyone seriously believes that the writer did not know of insects having six feet, he is entitled to that impression. The point of the passage is obviously that these insects were to be distinguished from birds which "go" on two feet! No one reading the verses could be under any doubt as to what flying things he might or might not eat.

So much has been said of Scriptural inaccuracy and the impossibility of an exact inspiration that, at the risk of wearying myself and the reader, I will add one or two other illustrations of "errors" in the Bible on which critics—even scholarly critics—rely.

In Romans ii: 11, we are told that "there is no respect of persons with God." But in Romans

ix: 13, we read "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." And this is held to be proof that St. Paul was not in the Spirit when he wrote his Epistle. The answer here is, of course, that a judge on the bench should have no respect of persons, but that he should certainly distinguish between an innocent man and a guilty man. If God had less respect for Esau than He had for Jacob, it is because Jacob had more respect than Esau for God.

Another is this: In Genesis xxii: 1, we are told that God did tempt Abraham. But in James i: 13, we read that God tempts nobody. The answer is here, again, to be found in the experience of every day. A father takes his son into business. He sends him traveling as an agent and so "tries him out." But he does not introduce him into haunts of vice to tempt him. God put the good in Abraham to the test. He did not encourage the evil in him. And it is an excellent lesson for all fathers.

Then we have the statement in Exodus that God hardened Pharoah's heart, which was, it is argued, a wrong thing for a God of love to do. If God did not harden Pharoah's heart, who did? That is the question, and no man yet has answered it. What *is* the origin of evil? We find the serpent in Eden, but where did the serpent come from? We have here, not a Biblical error, but the profoundest mystery of our existence. Job discussed it. It has been discussed by millions. And if you

cut out the texts in Exodus, you would not be solving the puzzle, but only running away from it. Pharoah had an imperious will. He refused to surrender that will to God. And inevitably his heart was hardened. Science calls it cause and effect. Islam calls it Kismet. Exodus calls it God. And the higher critic is content to call it a mistake in the Old Testament. That is, apparently, the sum total of education that many modern scholars derive from one of the immortal phrases in the literature of our race.

Finally: let us look at the oft-challenged verses; Exodus xxii: 18, God said, Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live; and Deuteronomy xxi: 18-21, in which the parents of a son who is "stubborn and rebellious," "a glutton and a drunkard" may have him stoned to death. Now let us be quite blunt over this matter. Is witchcraft defended? Is disrespect of children for parents condoned? Is the definite offence of gluttony or extravagance and of intemperance to be treated lightly? These are devastating sins. Everywhere, in those days, there was capital punishment for sins, trivial compared with these. Death was then the common penalty; today, we substitute dismissal and economic ruin. Let a railwayman drink and what mercy will be shown him? Let a bank-clerk overspend his salary, and where will he be at the end of the month? To those who wrote the Bible, sin was death, because sin, they believed, slays the soul. And, given

such sin, Our Lord Himself told us that the body did not very much matter.

The persecution of witches in England and at Salem, Massachusetts, was deplorable because the victims were innocent. They were not guilty of the crime alleged. But I am one who has seen what the witch doctor means for Africa. His sanguinary incantations are a fearful tyranny. And I am by no means certain that a humane administrator would not be justified in making a final example of such a terror incarnate. The Bible is not a gift only to Americans in the twentieth century. It is a gift to all races in all stages of social evolution. To Americans, the thing to prohibit is liquor. To the Jew, what tempted people to idolatry was a graven image, or picture, and it was such art that was prohibited. The principle is the same—"if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off." Or, in a sentence, any sacrifice is worth a victory over evil.

But it is the very purpose of the Bible to offer an alternative to the extreme penalties of the law. Nowhere is the terror of the Mosaic law described in more graphic terms than in the Epistle to the Hebrews with its references to "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries." We are there told that "he that despised Moses died without mercy under two or three witnesses." Just so; what the critic considers to be a harsh code of

criminal jurisprudence is here—nearly two thousand years before his modernism—declared to be such. He did not know it but he was emphasising the very essence of what has been condemned by his school as Pauline theology. The law was, as St. Paul put it, a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. What He did by dying was, somehow or other, to remove that curse of the law. We do not now need to slay sinners. He saves them. And the very dread of the law which is urged against the Bible proves to be the prelude of that grace—that healing of the diseased morality we call salvation.

The hard places in the Bible are thus never devoid of stimulus. Life is a problem to be solved, and so is the Book of Life. If that Book were wholly simple, it would be untrue.

And if it failed to bear the authentic marks of antiquity, the Book would have to be suspected as a record of the spiritual, moral, material and intellectual struggles with which it deals. There was a period when the production of stained glass was a lost art; and why? The manufacturers thought that beauty would be attained by eliminating every imperfection from the substance of their windows. And they thus gave the world what was obviously modern and devoid of charm. Their windows were perfect but uninspired. It was then discovered that the loveliness and value in the earlier glass was due to the retention of sand and other

extraneous substances which arrected and dispersed and humanised the light of day. Those windows were inspired by imperfection. And it is the same with the Bible. The other day, I asked myself what on earth of help I could derive from the measurements of Solomon's temple? And suddenly I remembered that my son is an architect, whose profession is thus, as it were, claimed by God.

On the genealogies of the Bible and the lists of David's mighty men, and the rôle of the priests and singers in Chronicles, I would dearly love to write at length; and some day, I may do so; enough to state here that during these controversies, I have deliberately tested these passages and found them worth while. You visit some ancient cathedral like Salisbury. And you say to yourself that there is something here which is of the spirit, spiritual. You cannot define it. But exact measurement shows you that the whole cathedral consists of what may be called minor mistakes. The windows are not quite uniform. The arches are slightly at variance. And the result is a living temple, everywhere bearing the stamp of a man's hand and of that divine brain with which man is endowed.

So with the Bible. They who would restore that ancient edifice by smoothing away the signs of age and applying to the structure the foot-rule of materialism, are guilty of the blunder which Ruskin

denounced when so many immortal buildings in England were "scraped" of their exquisite weathering and turned out spick and span, with not a fungus on them. Such modernism is not of science nor of the God who adds one ring of record for every season endured by the oak of the forest and adorns with His tapestry the humblest cottage that braves the rain and the tempest, sheltering a life within. His thoughts are not our thoughts and it is in earthen vessels that He offers us His treasures.

V

DID MIRACLES OCCUR?

IF I believe in miracles, it is not because I go to Church and read the Bible or "was brought up that way," but because, at the university, I was trained on exact mathematics and cannot now escape the conclusion that twice two are neither more nor less than four.

I begin by asking how the world began? And to this question, I can find no answer but—God. I ask myself, next, how this world will end? and again I can find no answer but God. Thirdly, I look into the fathomless blue of the sky which science tells me is due to illimitable distance and I ask whereunto does this universe extend? And again the only answer that I can discover is God. An illimitable time and an illimitable distance lead me to an infinite Being. I admit that there is an alternative, namely, Atheism or a denial of God. But, for myself, I cannot suppose that beyond Everything, there is only Nothing.

When I meet a friend, I study his character. And such study is the basis of biography and portraiture. Is it possible for me, then, to discover

what is the nature of God? I think it is. And here is the argument:

In my hand, I hold a pencil. There is a force called gravity which will draw this pencil to the table if I let go of it. That force is calculable, precise and certain, and yet, in fact, this pencil does not drop. Indeed, its motion cannot be predicted by any living soul for no one can tell what is the word which this pencil will write next.

The question is whether, as I write these words, I have a will of my own or not. Most people will say that I have; but there are some scientists who say that I haven't. The other day, I met a distinguished astronomer. In the most lucid language he told me that everything in the universe is subject to law, and only to law. Not only inanimate bodies like my pencil but men, animals and insects are subject to irresistible instincts which create impulses within them that are predetermined as fate. If we sin, it is not our fault. If we do well, it is no virtue. Moral responsibility, art, poetry, religion, love and joy are all a molecular illusion; and pain, laughter, sorrow and comfort, all the emotions of repentance, of romance and happiness, are merely atomic reactions. When I asked my friend if he thus explained his own charming smile and subtle humor, he replied that these also arose from natural causes—from a kind of biological calculus. He was entirely serious. For him, Astronomy had turned the universe, and his own

soul, into one vast automaton. On predestination, he was more Calvinistic than Calvin; on fatalism, he was more fatalistic than the Turk.

I am not prepared thus to ignore phenomena like art, romance, or this moving pencil as it writes. I believe that I have a will, that my will, within limits can over-rule a natural law like gravity and that if I have such a will, so has God. And if God be an infinite Being, His will for the universe must be, at least, as potent as my will is for this pencil. And as this pencil cannot fall to the ground without my consent, so—to quote Our Lord—cannot a sparrow fall to the ground without Our Father's knowledge and consent.

A miracle is God's will over-ruling God's law. And if God's will cannot over-rule God's law, we must abolish not only miracle but prayer. What is the use of praying, "Give us this day our daily bread," if our daily bread is determined by economic, botanic and climatic laws over which the God Who framed them has no control? In an answer to prayer, there is as much of a miracle as there is in the sun standing still for Joshua or in the axe-head floating for Elisha. Between the one and the other, there is scientifically no difference whatever. And my friend, the astronomer, was right when he argued that if God has no will apart from law, man has no will apart from law, and that everything is material which we have held to be spiritual. Unless there be miracle, or an in-

terference with natural law, God's will is in abeyance. And it follows, therefore, that if man Himself, and therefore God, is a responsible being, miracles not only may have occurred, but must occur at all times. The logic is as absolute and inescapable as the theorems of Euclid. And at the very moment when miracles are challenged, it is remarkable that the common people are thinking, as never before, of healing by faith, of spiritualism, of psycho-analysis, of telepathy, of auto-suggestion, of any and every pseudo-scientific synonym for what the Bible calls the power of God. From the devil-dancer in Africa to Dr. Coué in France and Christian Science in Boston, the authority of mind over matter is declared.

With this pencil, I write words. And if, in holding the pencil, I over-rule the law of gravity, it is because I have a thought to express. You see an aeroplane in the sky. It is subject to natural law. But within the aeroplane there is a human will. And in the sky, therefore, a trail of smoke traces letters which all who look upward can read. It is thus that God guides the universe. In events, we can trace His name and His name—so I shall now submit—is love. The miracles demonstrate that God's will is good will.

It is not to be supposed that all recorded miracles happened. I do not myself believe that the house where Joseph and Mary lived at Nazareth was carried through the air and deposited in an Italian

city called Loretto. But of the miracles recorded in the Bible, it can be said in every instance that I have studied that they have foreshadowed a beneficent science. Let us consider one or two examples.

"Sun," cried Joshua, "stand thou still upon Gibeon and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon." What was the issue thus challenged? Not Einstein's theory that time and space and color are all relative. It goes deeper than that. What Joshua challenged was the tyranny of time. Is the clock to be supreme or the clockmaker? Are we to worship the solar system or the Creator of the solar system? Is there law over sovereignty or sovereignty over law? In days when men worshipped the sun and moon, as some modernists would have us again do, Joshua declared that sun and moon are subject to the paramount claims of the soul. Nor, in man's whole career, has there been anything more remarkable than his attempt to obtain a victory over time. Not only does he now travel at a rate that lengthens his day's journey a hundred times, but he manufactures, at a rate which turns a year into a day, and he can talk at distances with an instantaneous speed, millions of times greater than that of the fastest runner ever employed by Joshua. Who were the men that achieved these wonders? The Chinese? The Hindus? No—they were the men who read the Book of Joshua and were stimulated by its assertion of man's infinite dignity. According to their

faith was it unto them. And they are even now preparing that civilisation, here or hereafter, of which it could be foretold that "time shall be no more."

An axe-head fell into the Jordan and, at the word of Elisha, "the iron did swim." Again, we say, impossible! Yet, again, how true as forecast. All over the world, iron *does* swim. Though wood floats and iron sinks, not a wooden vessel can be sailed at a profit. Who were the men who made iron to swim? Everyone of those men had in his subconscious mind a knowledge of the Bible, in which Book constantly was there developed the idea of man mastering water. It is the Book where one reads how the Israelites crossed the Red Sea dryshod, how Elijah crossed the Jordan, and how Our Lord walked on the Sea of Galilee. And the day was to come, indeed has nearly come, when we can say, "There is no more sea."

Again, chariots of fire! Have they not swept across the Atlantic? To Elisha, the conquest of the air was a miracle; but to one at least of the ancient prophets, it was a triumph of machinery. Once I asked a leading minister what he made of the first chapter of Ezekiel and he said, "a sand-storm in the desert!" It was, I felt, an arid exegesis. Ezekiel was a poet who observed certain simple mechanics. He saw the water-wheel, the spinning wheel, the chariot wheel, the potter's wheel; and, for his genius, that was enough. From

these elementary materials, he built up the first vision of an aeroplane—that is, of winged wheels that would fly, heavier than air, and would be driven by harnessed lightning. And he had the wisdom also to foresee that, wonderful as would be this triumph of the inventor, a man's face would be seen within its wings and a man's hand would guide its movements. Once more—the issue was the dignity of our race, flying like Icarus in the face of the sun. That chapter is a miracle of prophetic literature. Open the Bible and you will have that miracle before your eyes.

What was the effect of all this on nations that wrote and read the Bible? It shattered the idea that the sun and moon and stars are deities. It destroyed all superstitions associated with wood and stone. Man handled natural objects instead of dreading them. And where these miracles were known, civilisation took courage and advanced. First, the slogan, then, the science.

Perhaps, the biggest thing taught in the law of Moses was the duty of health. But in dealing with health, law was found to be not enough. The test case was leprosy. After his ablutions—the washing of cups and plates and hands and feet—a man might be smitten with this plague and what remained? Simply a dreadful segregation. Any cure would be a mere accident of good fortune. With this fatalistic view of disease, the Hebrews were not satisfied. Having witnessed the plagues

of Egypt, their first idea, when they emigrated from that country, was that God would heal them. So impregnated were their minds with this faith that when a Jewish maid was taken captive and set to serve the wife of Naaman, the captain of the hosts of Syria, who was a leper, her one regret was that this great man could not visit Elisha and be cleansed. Now, on *a priori* grounds, surely, you would have thought that the countries which have lepers, would be the countries to discover a cure for the leper. It is not so. If leprosy is being treated with increasing success, the credit is due entirely to the men and women who, but for the Bible, would have had no interest in and little knowledge of their evil. The miracle has inspired the remedy.

When Our Lord began His public life, He was faced, at once, by precisely the same situation as that with which Naaman's maidservant dealt so firmly. Jesus preached. But preaching was not enough. Into the very synagogue, the sick pursued him. Either He had to be master of the human body or He would be master of nothing. His own logic was unanswerable. "If I cannot cure paralysis"—that, in effect, was what He said—"it is certain that I cannot forgive sin." And in order to prove that He could forgive sin, He said to the sick of the palsy, "Rise up and walk." In the language of war, Our Lord stormed the trenches of disease, incidentally challenging prejudices which cost Him His life. And there is not a disease today to which

His Spirit is not a challenge. Fevers, tuberculosis, diabetes, one by one, the dread scourges of mankind are surrendering to treatment.

Did the dead rise? Once more, neither you nor I were there to see. But we are living, here and now, in this twentieth century and can see for ourselves the result of His action. "Raising the dead"—Lazarus, for instance—was not, of course, granting immortality. It was merely prolonging life to its natural term. In the case of the daughter of Jairus, of the widow's son at Nain and of Lazarus himself, death had claimed the comparatively young in their prime. The decease that was countermanded, as it were, was a premature decease. And is not this, once more, precisely what is happening today? In no country is there a greater volume of Christian belief than there is in the United States. And the statistics tell us that the life of the people has been prolonged on the average, by twenty years. No wonder that it was Luke, a doctor, who narrated most of these miracles of healing. So far from discouraging natural remedies, he is, of ten thousand hospitals today, the patron saint.

Our Lord employed whatever natural remedies were available. He told a blind man to bathe his eyes. When the daughter of Jairus was raised, He advised the family to give her something to eat. The man with the palsy had to be brought by four men, carrying him on a bed; he had to be

lifted to the roof of a house; the roof had to be broken up and the man had to be let down by ropes. The miracle was never used to save trouble to lazy people. It was not a substitute for service but an illumination of service by power. And so with the practice of the Early Church, as laid down by James, Our Lord's brother. That practice was to be in exact line with modern science, a fact which was more astonishing because those were days when, outside the Christian Society, insanity and disease were widely misunderstood. "In a case of illness," said St. James, "you must do two things—pray over the patient and anoint him with oil." There must be the spiritual influence; there must be the application of natural remedies, not one method without the other, but both. The object was to show that, in life and in death, God and man are not enemies or strangers, but partners and fellow-workers, for the good of all.

"Opening the eyes of the blind." It was a miracle once; but it is science now. We have the telescope, by which at last we see *far;* the microscope, by which we at last see *near;* and the X-Rays, by which at last we see *through.* "Making the deaf to hear"—it was again a miracle once; but, again, it is science now. We have the telephone, the radio, the stethoscope, the seismograph—all of them acting as ears for the deaf. Instead of famine, we see miracles of feeding; instead of drought, miracles of irrigation; and the widow's

cruise of oil is not exhausted. The natural resources of this speck of planetary dust, oil included, are found to be many times more than sufficient for the entire human race, even as it has multiplied in numbers.

There are miracles that have yet to be fulfilled. When prison doors opened to Peter and Paul, something happened which changed man's conception of criminology. When Christ rose from the dead, something happened that has been a challenge to the cross, the gibbet, the axe, the gallows, the electric chair. Everyone, today, knows in his heart that our penal systems are doomed, that regeneration and not punishment must become the aim of the law, and that the crime of man against society is but an element in the larger crime of society against the Father of us all. Whether the fetters fell in the past, is a question on which good men differ, but good men are agreed that, in the future, fetters *must* fall and prison gates be unbarred.

When therefore I read about miracles, I am not only concerned with their occurrence in the past; I consider also their message of hope for the present and the future. And if I accept the miracles, it is not in an emotion or because of a tradition. I cannot resist the larger truth to which the irresistible logic of science leads me. And I am unable, therefore, to subscribe to the narrow dogmas of a negative rationalism.

VI

HOW WAS CHRIST BORN?

ABOUT the birth of Jesus, however we may regard it, there has always been a tender and an exquisite mystery. We have here a true test of every true romance; a girl of utter innocence accused of ill and vindicated by angels and archangels and all the company of Heaven. To the deep sentiments of tradition, happily ineradicable from the Christian Church and spreading every year beyond the borders of that fold, I am ready myself to add a strict accountancy to whatever may be fairly claimed for truth by science. And I will begin with the angels and archangels. Why should they be denied? Astronomy teaches us what indeed prophet and psalmist long ago declared, that the stars are only to be numbered by God Himself; and yet we, living on one planet of one solar system, have the audacity to assume that nowhere else, either in the universe or beyond it, are there living beings, fulfilling as angels or resisting as devils the will of God. And such an attitude of mind, narrow, negative and in the truest sense superstitious, is described as liberal, modern and scientific.

If this little world of ours teems with men and women, birds, beasts, reptiles, insects, and microbes; with flowers, trees, and fungi, grass, anemones, and the fish of the sea, it is at least likely and to me certain that the Bible, correctly expressing the universal instinct of mankind, has been wisely inspired in revealing to us those other beings than ourselves, in other states of existence, in which Our Lord believed as firmly as He believed in the existence of the twelve Apostles. And if there be such angels and devils, I can imagine no occasion more likely to disclose their existence than the birth of a man as Son of God. The denial of angels and devils on the part of science is not progress; it is pedantry. It is not only in religion that the letter killeth. This is true also of physics, of mathematics, of anthropology.

There is, too, another thing that the negativist in religion, science and history has to remember. By all means, let us have science, but our science, however exact, is none the less science if it be attuned to chivalry; and even the scientist, when he approaches the home in Nazareth, must not forget that he was meant to be a gentleman. The honor of Mary, Mother of Jesus, is a priceless possession of her sex and of our race. It was the glory of her innocence—nay, of her vindication against slander and suspicion—which inspired and hallowed the otherwise gross art and poetry and manners of those middle ages whence emerged our modern

civilisation. Approaching her presence, we must put off the shoes from our feet for that ground is holy ground. The reverence for her who was declared to be blessed above all women is the measure of the reverence paid to her sisters, the wide world over. It was this reverence that reared the Cathedral of Rheims. The nation that bombarded the Cathedral of Rheims was the nation that preferred the negatives of negativism to the knowledge of faith. If I have to make a choice, I would rather be wrong with the men who build than right with the men who bombard; I would rather be wrong with the men who made Europe a home than right with the men who made Europe a hell. Happily, there need be no such choice. If Jesus be deity, the difficulty is then, not to believe the story of Christmas, but to imagine how it could have been otherwise.

With those who see in Jesus a good man who lived and died two thousand years ago, I do not argue over His birth. These people have rejected not the story of Christmas only but all the distinctive features of those biographies which we call the gospels. To their own master, they stand or fall. Indeed, it is better for a man faithfully to honor Christ as man than for him to call Him God, and then, like Judas, betray Him with the kiss of orthodoxy. But the denial of the divinity of Jesus is no new thing. It was manifest in Galilee when Jesus lived there and labored. "Is

not this the carpenter's son?" they asked, "Is not His mother called Mary? And His brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, are they not with us? Whence then hath this man these things?" In every age, then, there have been those who could see in Jesus either a man only or only a myth. If He be mere man, then, like other men, He would have an earthly father. If He be mere myth, He need not be born at all. But we must not overlook the fact, as recorded of those who challenged His paternity, that, "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." They were "offended in Him," and with reason. As son of Joseph, He was claiming more than any son of any Joseph had ever claimed. Taking broadly the achievements of the Church, the volume of which is greater than some critics have discovered, you will find that the conquest over sin, over pain, over idolatry, over ignorance, over passion, has been won in the main through faith, not doubt. And it was Christ who said that according to our faith, not our doubt, would it be unto us. He was wisdom and He knew.

But what, I confess, does much puzzle me is the attitude of the man who, while refusing to subscribe to a belief in the Virgin Birth, says with emphasis that to him Jesus of Nazareth is God; that He walked on the water; healed the sick; cleansed the lepers; was transfigured; died; rose again; ascended into heaven; and returns to us by

the Holy Spirit to be born again in our hearts; who, I say, believes all this, and yet protests that the Lord Jesus Christ, thus very God of very God, must have been born "even as you or I." All the ninety and nine glories of the Christ are freely conceded. But the hundredth is denied. His person is unique, His life is unique, His teaching is unique, His power is unique, His death is unique, His love is unique, but His birth is the average. To every man on this planet and to every beast and to every insect and to every fish, science applies the hereditary principle; in Christ alone, heredity does not matter. He is the one king who need not be royal. He is the one son on whom the sins of the fathers do not descend. In this view of Christ, there is surely an aberration of logic. Once admit that He is Deity and, in the accurate sense of that word, it would have been extraordinary, even incredible, if He had come to us by an ordinary birth.

Not only among the Jews but all over the world, people have yearned for a God who would dwell among them. What Paul described as "the earnest expectation of the creature" for "God with man" is to be found in the poetry of Greece and Rome, in Norse legend, Egyptian worship and Indian mysticism. Away in the dim ages of early Genesis, we read of the sons of God visiting the daughters of men. And centuries before the birth of Christ, Isaiah sang that "unto us a son is

given," whose name included "the mighty God." Christ has been, therefore, the one adequate fulfilment of a hope which, however degraded in some of its manifestations, was universal. Shatter His person, and we are left "having no hope and without God in the world." His coming was not contrary to our aspiring instincts as a race. It was the supreme expression of those instincts.

And with every discovery of science, we need Him the more. For what is this world wherein we must live our lives? It is no longer a cosy little cottage where all is familiar. The walls of our home are thrown down and we find ourselves clinging to a speck of planetary dust that floats in illimitable space. Lonely as a cloud, we wander, lost in distances, lost in aeons of time, lost in myriads of organisms. *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars; what is man that thou art mindful of him and the son of man that thou visitest him?* If God do not visit us, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. Otherwise, we must go mad. In science without faith, there is a sure prospect of increased insanity. Emmanuel, "God with us," is the one guardian of our common-sense.

The statement in St. John's Gospel is that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word . . . was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." Translated into Latin, that was "the Incarna-

tion"; and for the sake of discussion, we may consider the various ways in which it might have happened.

First, a God-Man might have appeared, full-grown, educated, complete. That was how the Greek gods came and went, without birth or death, and you have similar appearances of Buddha. Indeed, after His resurrection, Christ thus came to His disciples in the upper room, utter God and utter man, but this was only after He had been *in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.* If He had avoided birth we could never have found in Him a guide to the life that, here and now, we have to live. Mothers would not have seen the Christ in their children. And children would not have discovered the Christ "playing in the market place." Fathers, too, would have missed the sympathy of Joseph who knew what it was to be bread-winner for a household which included the Christ. Hence, it is, as it were, inevitable that the Christ had to be born.

With God, as the angel Gabriel said to Mary, nothing is impossible. If Jesus had been, like James and Jude and Joses, a son of Joseph, the Almighty could, at any time, have entered His being and made Him incarnate. For instance, it might be possible to argue that Jesus was mere man before His baptism, and became God when the Spirit there descended on Him. But while that theory would get rid, perhaps, of the story of

Christmas, it would not get rid of the miracle in His incarnation. It would merely substitute a miracle of baptism for a miracle of birth. And the later miracle would be the less convincing. It may be hard to imagine a man born as God. But it is much harder to imagine a man, born and reared only as man, yet suddenly becoming God. The baptism of John was no more than a local ordinance and few, comparatively only a small number of the human race, have been thus baptised. But all of us have to be born, and birth is thus not a ceremony, dependent on choice, but a necessity of nature. Indeed, the very word nature is birth. And the simple, the obvious moment for God to visit man was when God's Son was conceived.

Joseph was doubtless a good man. According to the Gospels, he adopted the child Jesus and brought Him up. To the royal pedigree of Joseph, Jesus therefore became legally entitled. And that pedigree is set out at length both by Saint Matthew and by Saint Luke. Not however without startling comment which has not always received accurate attention by scholars. On the escutcheon of Joseph, there appears more than once what heralds call the bar sinister. It was of Tamar, who "played the harlot," that Judah begat his son Phares. It was of Rahab, "the harlot," that Salmon begat Boaz. It was of Ruth, "the Moabitess," that Boaz begat Obed. And it was of "her that had been the wife of Uriah," the significantly

unmentioned Bathsheba, that David begat Solomon. And Luke traces the ancestry of Joseph back to Adam himself, the symbol of him who has sinned. As the adopted "son" of Joseph, Jesus was entitled to that legal pedigree. But the very Evangelists who set out the pedigrees are the Evangelists who furnish a full narrative of the other and the divine paternity. For them, it was not enough that legally the Messiah should be the heir of David, of Abraham, of Adam. As we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he must be "a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec"—that Melchisedec who was "king of righteousness" and "king of Peace"—without mother, without father, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God."

The statement that the Virgin Birth is mentioned and implied only in two gospels and nowhere else, may be dismissed as simply one of many assertions, *ex parte,* of modern criticism in a transient mood of negativism. Whoever was Our Lord's father, He certainly had a mother and that mother certainly knew the facts. It was not until she had lived many years in the company of the disciples that Mary died. The Early Church had thus a direct witness in her midst on this question, now to be determined. The disciple to whom Our Lord resigned His care of Mary was Saint John, and by tradition at any rate, it is to Saint John that we

owe the Fourth Gospel. One of his favorite phrases, applied to Jesus, is "only begotten Son of God." It is a phrase about the meaning of which it is not easy to entertain a doubt. If he had merely said that Jesus was the Son of God, we might have argued, perhaps, that there is a true sense in which we are all sons of God, or ought to be. But an "only begotten" son means, and can only mean a son of God in a sense in which none other is God's son. We may accept this as a fact or we may reject it, but the claim could not have been expressed in plainer terms.

And if the words of Christ be truly reported, the claim is one which He Himself asserted. "Thou art not yet fifty years old," said the Jews to Him as they were contending in the Temple, "and hast thou seen Abraham?" He answered, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.* The word there translated "verily" is the Hebrew word "Amen." It means faithful and is used in the Apocalypse for God. Never did a more terrific asseveration pass man's lips than the repeated "verily, verily" of Jesus. And that His hearers understood what He meant is shown by the fact that they "took up stones to cast at him."

When Jesus was on trial before Pilate, the same point arose. After He had been scourged, and was menaced by the awful cry for crucifixion, the precise charge against Him was formulated by the Jews in the words, "We have a law, and by our

law He ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." As a prisoner, Jesus was never silent when there was a genuine misunderstanding to be cleared up. He spoke frequently to Pilate. If He had been the son of Joseph, how easy to say so! In fact, as the Way, the Truth and the Life, it was the clear duty of Christ to make it plain that there was a misapprehension, that He had spoken of God as His Father, only as we all speak of God as our Father, that there was no especial divinity implied in His claim, which had only to be interpreted in a spiritual sense. Rather than utter that explanation, Our Lord went to the Cross. The precise indictment on which at the end He was convicted was that He claimed what we today call the Virgin Birth. This was the very essence of the alleged blasphemy.

Men are defective in imagination when they ask what difference it makes, here and now, whether or not Christ was a son of Joseph. Tell a white man that he has colored blood in his veins and you will soon discover the importance of paternity. Tell the British Empire that King George was not the son of his father, and you will discover the importance of paternity. On paternity depends a man's health, his face, his character; and the very kernel of John 3:16, with its promise of the full life, here and hereafter, is that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." It was, I think, Lord Morley who, in his "Life of Glad-

stone," says of a certain politician that he had the fatal fault of underestimating the importance of the problems with which he had to deal. They who talk as if the birth of Our Lord were a mere incidental of faith are victims of the same error.

It was from His Mother that Our Lord received the truth of His birth. Twice are we told by Saint Luke that she kept these things and pondered them in her heart. When Christ was twelve years old, He was left behind in Jerusalem, and His mother, when she found Him, said to Him, "Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." But there came from the Boy an answer which was obviously a quiet rebuke and an implied disclaimer. "How is it," He asked, "that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" The rabbis, then as now, "understood not the saying which He spake unto them." But His mother knew what He meant by that distinction between Joseph and His Father and she was silent. She also knew who He was at the marriage feast of Cana, where she said, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." And while it is true that for a time His own brothers did not believe on Him, that imperception did not survive His death and triumph over the tomb. James was then ready to proclaim himself "a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." And Jude, while ready enough to be known as "the brother of James," was insistent that he was "servant of Jesus Christ," to whom

frequently in his Epistle he renders the divine honor.

Not that Our Lord Himself ever, as it were, intruded His high birth into the conversation of the day. The genuine aristocrat is never assertive; but, in humblest guise, he is none the less well-bred. Whatever was the birth of Christ, His love was even greater. His birth was an event. The love is an event for evermore. And therefore there were many who came to Him and received His goodness without appreciating in precise terms His incarnation. The thief, whose cross was next to the Cross of Christ, did not discuss the Annunciation. And his testimony is all the more remarkable because it was based, not on creeds, but on personal contact. He observed the apparent felon and declared Him to be a king—that is, a man of regal birth. Similarly, the centurion who exclaimed, "Truly, this was the Son of God"—he also observed the Christ and found it impossible to avoid an even more stupendous conclusion, namely, that He was of divine birth.

And that is the reason why the Church as a whole will never be able to surrender the mystery of Christmas. If Christ be absent from our company, then, doubtless we can discuss what has been called "the historicity" of His mother's honor in a detached manner. But if He be present, as He is always present when two or three are gathered together in His Name, it is not quite so easy even

for scholars and critics to make free with the evidence appertaining to this case. We all remember the saying that if Shakespeare were to enter the room, we should rise to our feet, but that if Christ were to enter, we should sink to our knees. So worshipping the Saviour, there would be in us a certain incongruity if we were to say to His face what we say behind His back about His Mother.

If, when challenged in the Court of Criminal Law, He did not waver about His origin, it was because He was the Truth, and with the Truth, however strange, He refused to tamper. But there was another reason. His mother was then in Jerusalem and this was a matter in which her reputation was as much at stake as his own. If He had pronounced her to be an impostor, the very devils of cynicism would have mocked the angels' chorus. He stood firm and He died and the whole world keeps His birthday.

Hence, we are able to pray at "the Nativity of Our Lord"—"commonly called Christmas Day": *Almighty God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son, to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin; Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same Our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same spirit ever one God, world without end, Amen.*

To what Tennyson, in his "Christmas Carol,"

called "the faithless coldness of the times" there is thus today, as there was sixty years ago, an answer. Not that Our Lord Himself would desire that His birth should be an occasion of anger among His disciples who differ about it. Whatever else we may think about Christmas, it was at least meant to be a season of peace and goodwill among men. But speaking for myself, if I may so far presume, I am thankful that I have not been called upon by the Spirit to doubt or to question an event so inevitable as this, that, in appearing amongst us, Jesus, the Son of God, was born of God; and that in Him, thus born, we also may be born of God, so becoming His brethren, achieving His mastery over evil and sharing the high privileges of His divine estate in the Court of the Eternal.

VII

CAN CHRIST SAVE?

WE who are responsible for newspapers cannot avoid the ugly facts of life. We are confronted by the necessity of reporting daily the crimes, the adulteries, the wars, the slanders, which are perpetrated by a generation where men and women think that they are rising superior to religion. It is only in sermons, therefore, and particularly in up-to-date sermons, that the word "sin" is, today, obsolescent. It is so pleasant to live under the influence of a narcotic in a world of large vague words which sound learned, and modern, and liberal, but mean nothing to the man in actual trouble. Suppose that one is ill. What comfort would it be if a doctor, at the bedside, were to deliver an abstract homily on the general tendency of research into diseases of the lungs or of the heart? In such a crisis, one asks, not for culture, but a cure. One does not require instruction but healing. And one expects the doctor to decide, not to doubt. His duty is diagnosis. And after diagnosis, prescription.

I am bound, therefore, to introduce into these pages the ugly fact of sin. What compels me to

face this phenomenon is not faith but science. As there are diseases of the body, so, obviously, there are diseases of the soul, the mind, the will, of whatever within me is myself. The one peril against which doctors warn us is our habit of concealing from the physician a known disease. And, here as elsewhere, the rule of science is the rule of religion. "If," so declares Saint John, "we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." It is only by uncovering the leprosy that it can be cleansed. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In Christ, there is a penetrating X-ray which pierces the corruption and destroys it, leaving the soul as the soul of a little child. Hence Our Lord's statement that "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth [or is changed in mind] more than over ninety-and-nine just persons which need no repentance." It is the attitude of the modern state which insists upon the medical examination and treatment of boys and girls in a school clinic lest there be original disease. So with original sin. Let it be detected in the earliest stages. It was because He came to save His people from their sins, that Our Lord was called Jesus. The word means Saviour. And to save was His life-work.

From the fact of sin, our modern science offers, therefore, no release. Indeed, science cannot insist

on law without showing us how frequently these laws are broken. "Behold," wrote Saint Paul, "thou art called a Jew and restest in the law. . . . Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking of the law dishonourest thou God?" As with the laws of Moses, so with the laws of nature. To the professors in their laboratories, as to the Pharisees in their synagogues, we may say: "Thou that makest thy boast of the laws of nature, dishonourest thou science?" The laws of science cannot save. Again to quote Saint Paul, they are merely the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. They show us where we have come short of the glory of health and of wisdom, and thus include us all, as did the Jewish law, under sin.

The symptoms of this dread disease are broadly two—iniquity and transgression. Iniquity means missing one's aim. Transgression means exceeding one's duty. And both iniquity and transgression imply that the sufferer is not quite sane. A girl, however beautiful and charming, who lives for money alone, and a man, however able and diligent, who lives for money alone, are, in the strict sense of the term iniquitous, and both of them need to be healed. Their life is not worth such living. It is right to be decisive; it is transgression to lose your temper. It is right to love; it is transgression to lust. It is right to earn; it is transgression to covet. It is right to bear witness; it is transgression to bear false witness. It is right

to persuade men; it is transgression to persecute men who are not persuaded. Nor are these evils the imaginary myths attributed so often to the Churches. When the Kaiser transgressed into Belgium, it cost twenty million lives. If sin is omitted from our sermons, it does not mean that drink, and divorce, and murder, and theft, and graft, and suicide are omitted from society and politics. We merely substitute the penitentiary for the penitent form and the Criminal Court for the Christ.

To deny "the fall of man" is to utter a negative that leads us nowhere. Whether or not there was "a fall of man," it is at least certain that there was a fall of *this* man. The fact that Herbert Spencer was a philosophic scientist does not mean that he was a successful saint. On the contrary he was querulous, difficult, opinionated, and intolerant of what he failed to appreciate, and no man ever exhibited more clearly the lack of the larger mind that there is to be found alone in Christ. It is Our Lord Who taught us how to read the Book of Genesis. He said that the kingdom of heaven, which means the command of happiness, is within us. The Garden of Eden is within us. The Tree of Knowledge is within us. Of that age-long drama of temptation and exile from the regions of innocence, we are ourselves the stage; our lives are the setting. They who deny the fall of man suggest that we were more wicked as babies than we

are as adults. It is the exact reverse of what every day of our lives we observe. And what Christ said was that we must be born again, must again become as little children, if we would enter the kingdom of God. He said this because He knew what was in man. His eye could see through the veil of flesh to the disease within. On sin, He was the Expert.

That there has been a serpent in our Eden is obvious. What is satire, what is cynicism, what is malice, except the trail of the serpent? Whence the serpent came into Eden, we are not told, nor has anyone ever found out. Read a library of books on ethics and you will not discover one hint of the origin of evil. All the accumulated thought of thousands of years leaves us with what we learn in that ancient and now oft-derided chapter of Genesis, not a syllable less and not a syllable more. That evil excludes us from Eden, destroys our communion with God, and instigates Cain to kill his brother Abel; and that man himself must somehow defeat evil by bruising the serpent's head—this is the sum total of what today, in the twentieth century, we know of this matter.

In the Old Testament, the clue to which mystery is so ill understood, we are able to analyse man's struggle with sin. We learn that the malady is universal and that a change of environment is no remedy. Cain and Abel were farmers; that was the simple life, but in the simple life, as Thomas

Hardy has shown, there was sin. Enoch, on the other hand, "builded a city," but the fate of Jericho showed that a city, even with walls that reach unto heaven and "scrape the sky," needs a defence against sin. In art, there was no salvation. Jubal "was father of all such as handle the harp and organ"; but how easily was music degraded to the worship of the Golden Calf and the impious tyranny of King Nebuchadnezzar who used "the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut and dulcimer" merely as a signal for humiliation before his despotism. Industry did not cure sin. There was Tubal-cain, "an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron," founder therefore of metal-work, but it was of that very iron and brass that man forged his fetters. Romance did not help. With the sons of God marrying the daughters of men, the wickedness, we read, was great in the earth. Nor did an age of athletics alleviate the trouble. There were "giants in the earth in those days." They were "men of renown." They could have been photographed for the newspapers. But the verdict of the Lord was, "He also is flesh." Chosen for his stature, King Saul committed suicide.

To get rid of sin became the one aim of the greatest men of every generation. To Noah, redemption meant an ark for the elect family of God; his ideal was safety from the flood which destroyed everyone else; but to be safe did not mean to be

sinless; and the last glimpse we have of Noah is one of drunkenness and shame. And after Noah, came men who dismissed as old-fashioned his idea of personal salvation and declared for a change in the social system. Organise, said they, your way to heaven; and so rose the Tower of Babel. But here again, bricks and mortar did not save men from sin. On the contrary, the First International was rent by rivalries. To have one system, like Bolshevism, was not enough. What society needed was not a system but a Saviour.

Abraham, in his turn, was the earliest of the pilgrim fathers. It was his idea to start life afresh in a new world where, building an altar unto the Lord, he would enjoy a full liberty of worship. But into that land of promise, Abraham carried not only his ideals. His imperfections also pursued him, and the nation he founded was borne back ultimately into the very valley of Chaldea from which Abraham set forth and there suffered a captivity of which Abraham was never conscious. Emigration does not save people from sin.

Joseph devoted his energies to fighting famine. He was the Hoover of his day, the food-controller of the land of Egypt. It was good work but it was not the Gospel. The very measures which Joseph adopted only served to concentrate power in the hands of Pharaoh and so paved the way for the appalling industrial slavery under which, at a later date, the Israelites groaned until their cry of

anguish entered into the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth. Laboring for the meat that perisheth, feeding the children in Russia—it is all excellent and necessary, but it is not by bread alone that man truly lives.

Moses set up a theocracy. The Church and the State were one. The law of man was the law of God. The policy of the President was the guidance of Jehovah. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night together symbolised a perfect national religion. But within that chosen nation, there was sin. To atone for sin, not a day passed without the sacrifice of bulls and goats. The national worship of God was not enough. The very sons of Eli, the Highpriest—Hophni and Phineas—became corrupt. And the last of Jewish temples was built by Herod the Great who tried to kill the Christ.

So with the Judges. These were men who insisted—and rightly—that by itself the law is not enough. What also matters is the honesty with which the law is administered. The Judges were thus citizens who, in office, did justice. But the greatest of them in exploits, Samson, failed in his private life and died a captive to his own immorality; while Samuel, the greatest of them in sagacity, left no successor and was compelled to nominate a king. Among the Jews, among the Romans and among the Greeks, the Republic failed and was succeeded by royalty.

And was royalty any improvement? Saul, a suicide; David, a repentant adulterer; Solomon, a pervert to idolatry; Rehoboam, who split the nation; Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin; what dynasties of disillusionment! Yet with a king, everything had been tried and everything had failed.

Hence there arose men called the prophets who said to themselves that it was useless to put one's trust in princes. Not only Israel and Judah, but Edom and Moab and Tyre and Egypt and Nineveh and Babylon, despite all their power, despite all their pride, despite all their pleasures, despite all their riches, were doomed by the one pervading epidemic of sin. Against sin, it was futile to array the chariots and horsemen of militarism. Sin was a heart-disease and it was to the heart that a remedy must be applied. *Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.*

It was not that the prophets attacked Noah and Abraham and Joseph and Moses and Samuel and David, the King. But they knew that, as saviours, they had failed. Yet a saviour was wanted. They said of their own day what we say of Europe today, that "the whole head is sick and the whole heart, faint." Someone, therefore, was needed in whom would be found the foresight of Noah, the insight of Abraham, the sagacity of Joseph, the courage of Moses, the equity of Samuel and the royal prestige of David.

Brooding over the hope of such a man, the prophets and psalmists began to piece together his biography. He would come as a child. But He would be wonderful, a Counsellor; yes, and more than that. He would be "the mighty God" and "the Everlasting Father" among men—not only a king of Israel, but "the Prince of Peace" of whose government there should be no end. The deity of Our Lord was thus no improvisation of Paul in Arabia. It was declared centuries before Jesus appeared in Nazareth. Nor was it a mere dream. These men, in their agony over pain and oppression and wickedness, came deliberately to the conclusion that unless God Himself visited men, our race would perish. And this is not a later supposition by theologians of what the prophets thought. I am no theologian. But I have eyes in my head and I can read plain print. The Bible has it down in black and white.

These seers saw even more deeply into the mystery of salvation. That a Saviour must be God was not their only certainty. Though the Saviour was God, yet—so they thought—would He be despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. That also was said, centuries before Christ came. These prophets had found out by hard experience that men are apt to be rebels against right. Until men be righteous, no king who reigns in righteousness can be popular. He must needs grow up as a tender plant and as a

root out of a dry ground. He would have no form nor comeliness and when men saw him, there would be no beauty that they should desire Him. And to be rejected of men means, for a king, to die.

And yet death would not be defeat. The twenty-second Psalm—which, by the way, is a miracle of literature that no criticism and no scholarship has either explained or explained away, actually describes the crucifixion in detail, closing with a pæan of victory; how "the kingdom is the Lord's and he is the governor of the nations," how "all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee." The Saviour might suffer to the extremity of torture. His bones might be torn asunder, as on the Cross. His tongue might cleave to his mouth with thirst, as on the Cross. Dogs or Gentiles might compass Him and pierce His hands and His feet, as on the Cross. His body might be exposed, as on the Cross. And they might part His garments among them and cast lots for His vesture. But, despite all that, "a seed shall serve him" and "it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation."

Those were the actual words, read in the synagogues on the Sabbath, for generations before Christ came. As a boy, He heard them thus read. And He accepted a destiny, thus dreadful and thus glorious. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. He died to save us.

Did He succeed? or must we include Him among all the many men, great and good in their

way, who wanted to save their fellows and failed? On the answer to this question depends the fate of mankind. For sin, like disease, is followed by consequences. It is not merely a misfortune; it is also a fault in ourselves and an injury to others. On the one hand, we cannot forgive ourselves. And on the other hand, there is nobody else to forgive us. It is within our own selves that we are ashamed. And it is this shame which drives us from church, which shuts up for us the Bible, which alienates us from Our Father and His grateful children. As Shakespeare put it, "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all." We are guilty and we know it.

It is that knowledge which has driven millions of sensitive sinners to hard penances. It is that knowledge which hardens the face of many a man and woman whose best self lies crushed by the intolerable memory, called remorse. Our litanies are full of pleas for pardon and a yearning for mercy. If there be a God, then God is the ultimate Judge, and before Him Who knows all, we are afraid to appear. We hope that God is love, but we are sure that God is justice.

About Our Lord, there is this admitted fact, that no one convicted Him of sin; that no one now suggests that He could have sinned. Nothing that He suffered in dying can have been His own fault. Everything was, therefore, the fault of others. And not one of us can have sinned against God

or a neighbour more deeply than they sinned who crucified Christ. Yet He still loved mankind and still forgave. If, then, He on the Cross could and did thus forgive all who sinned against Him, we must forgive all who sin against us, and it is clear that, if we so forgive, He also will and does continue to forgive us. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Christ has died. And in dying, He pardoned.

To those, then, who desire a relief from the sense of guilt, of shame, perchance of secret shame and guilt, which for years may have blighted their happiness, I would say that there is no need to disturb the mind over the abstruse phrases which Christ Himself never used. We have all read how Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his own son as an atonement for sin and how his hand was stayed at the sight of a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns, which became an alternative victim. So ended the possibility of human sacrifices in the worship of Jehovah—those sacrifices of children which continued for centuries among the neighbouring nations. But as a remedy for sin, the four-footed scapegoat of Moses was not enough. If a lamb was to be slain for sin, it must be, as John the Baptist expressed it, "the Lamb of God." He, and He only, could take away the sin of us all. It is not a creed that rescues us; it is the Christ. It is not a word like "atonement." It is not an adjective like "substitutionary" or "vicarious."

It is a person. As Paul put it, God "spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all," to be, in Christ's own phrase, "a ransom for many."

And this means that through days of despair and through nights of doubt and sorrow, the anguish of failure to be good, the misery of a ruined self-respect, when we cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" we may find Him at our side; He Who trod that winepress alone; and we may hear His voice, assuring us, "It is I; be not afraid." "*Who is he that condemneth?*" asked Paul; "*it is Christ that died.*" And Christ, writing on the ground, inscribing His Name of love even upon the soil of a downtrodden character, looks the fallen man, the fallen woman in the face and declares: "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more."

VIII

IS HAPPINESS WRONG?

MANY of us, who are starting life, suppose that Christ came into this world to substistute new duties for old pleasures. They think of religion as a spoil-sport and they resent it. Here we all were, enjoying our games like children, when the schoolmaster appears round the corner and calls us back to compulsory chapel. Now if this were really the mission of Christ, then I say frankly that it would be no part of my business in life to recommend it. I want a good time, and the man who never has a good time, seldom if ever, remains efficient. In the Declaration of Independence, we are told to engage in the pursuit of happiness, and the greater happiness of the greater number is or ought to be the aim of all government. And if this be true of statesmen who manage a country, how can it be untrue of God Who upholds the Universe? Unless God be the devil, what conceivable reason can He have for making His children miserable? *What man is there of you,* asked Jesus, *whom if His son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Of if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?* If we then, being evil, know how to give

good gifts unto our children, how much more shall our Father which is in heaven give good things to us who ask him? *"Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat"*—that is the *Magna Carta* of mankind; and it was to a young man, Timothy, that Paul wrote of *the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.* His watchword was *"rejoice in the Lord, and again I say, rejoice."* And it is the joy of the Lord that is to be our strength. That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store; that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands on our farms; that our oxen may be strong to labour; and that there be no complaining in our streets—these were the hopes of the psalmist. And anticipating our statesmanship, he cried, *Happy is that people, that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.* It is in the Bible, therefore, that the pursuit of happiness is announced. And it is in the lands which the Bible has influenced that the art of happiness has been developed. There are many Indians, many Chinese, many citizens of Japan who adopt the Western manner. There are few, if any, Occidentals who adopt the manners of the East. And I sometimes think that if those young people who grouse and grumble over the occasional restraints of Christian custom, could have a taste of etiquette, let us say, in Nepal or Baluchistan, they would appreciate more thankfully

than they sometimes do, the freedom by which their lives are surrounded.

"Yes," you say, "that is all very well, but if what you tell us is correct, why do holy men and women retire into a monastic seclusion and adopt a severe rule of life and array themselves in a sombre garb? Why is there this talk in England of a Nonconformist conscience? Why does the Puritan tradition condemn the dance, the drama and the race course? Why is the Bible the one book that we bind in black? And why is the face for Church a long face? The style of sermons is as serious as the Sunday when we have to listen to them, and we have been told, over and over again, that if we would follow the Master, we must sacrifice our amusements. In these amusements we do not see that there is any harm and we consider it to be unreasonable to ask us to choose, let us say, between cards and Christ. Why cannot we have Christ and also our cards?"

These are searching questions. They are sensible questions. And I will do what I can to furnish an answer. It will be admitted, I think, that the question whether we enjoy ourselves, say at the theatre or at a dance, depends not only on the play or the band, but on ourselves. Even the gayest of us is not always in the mood for these entertainments which thus become actually distasteful, like food on a voyage when the sea is rough. This is the reason why pious people, say in Tibet—or even

nearer home—torture themselves and undergo incredible penances. This is why the Puritans pulled long faces when they went to church. They were afflicted by an inner uneasiness, a sense of guilt, a shadow over the soul which they were unable to dispel; and to suggest to these people that they should laugh and sing and join in the pleasures of the ballroom would have been as cruel as to tell a consumptive, when he coughs, that he is silly not to seek for health in a cabaret.

For instance, there was the case of Mary Magdalene, a woman of wealth and of fashion, but wretchedly miserable amid her social triumphs. Of what use would it have been for Our Lord to offer her a round of social excitements? What she needed was to be rid of seven devils,—the shame, the hysteria, the insomnia, the disillusion, the despair, the jealousy, the horror of advancing age, the tyrannous vanity, all of which drive women into moody melancholia, aggravated by ragged nerves. If Mary Magdalene was happier at the sepulchre of Our Lord than ever she had been at the gladiatorial games, the reason is that Christ had saved her from her own self. She was no longer running away from a pursuing shadow of inescapable remorse.

Merely to express a hope that we might all of us have a fine day would have cost Christ nothing. In order to dispel the nightmare of an uneasy conscience and relieve sensitive souls of their self-

torture, He had Himself to endure the Cross, to visit "the spirits in prison," to share the trouble which too often leads to despair and suicide. That is why, in the *Te Deum*, we sing, *When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death: thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven*—which means the realm of happiness—*to all believers.* Whatever be our pleasures, we enjoy them ten times the more when we enter into them with a light heart. It is not that, in Christ, we are better people than others. St. Paul used to call himself the chief of sinners. But we are in better company.

It was thus to set up a kingdom of heaven or realm of happiness that Our Lord came. Between His aims and our own "pursuit of happiness" there is no conflict. Indeed, it is a true yet startling fact that He said more about happiness than He did about religion. If there had been no Christ and no Bible, there would still have been plenty of religion among men, much of it cruel religion. Where religion is right, we need more of it, but where it is wrong, it should be swept away. What Our Lord had actually to combat was thus the religion of many Jews, and what St. Paul had to criticise was the religion of Athens. When the Jews abolished idols, they were attacking religion. And when Abraham was released from the obligation to sacrifice Isaac, he was correcting religion. In the name of religion, Moab and Edom passed their children through the fire to Moloch, but the

prophet Zechariah pleaded for a city, full of boys and girls, playing in the streets thereof. In other words, if there be a conflict between religion and happiness, it is religion that has to be surrendered. That is the rule of Christian missions. Everywhere, the missionary finds religion; in Christ, what he offers is a religion of happiness.

For what was it that Christ condemned in the religion of the Pharisees? It was this very fact that they made religion, not a happiness, but a burden. One is reminded of the passage in Isaiah, in which the prophet gives us God's impression of a worship that is devoid of interest—*I am full,* said Jehovah, *of the burnt offerings of rams. I delight not in the blood of bullocks. Bring no more vain oblations. Your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth. They are a trouble unto me. I am weary to bear them.* That was strong language to employ, even of a dull Sunday, but it shows that the Bible is the one book in the world that is bigger and better and brighter than its binding. It is not in the Bible that insistence is laid on the shadows of life. The Bible is a record rather of shadows receding from the soul. The environment of God which at first seemed to be fire and cloud, became, as Christ revealed the Father, a rainbow; and God's Voice of thunder was stilled to a whisper of intimate consolation. The city that He offered us was, at first, no more than a City of Refuge where we could be safe but that City, illuminated by

the glory of Christ, gathered unto herself the splendour of a Bride, adorned for her husband.

Having found in Christ that peace which passeth all understanding, we approach the choice of our pleasures as free citizens in the Kingdom of Heaven. In these matters, nobody has a right to dictate to us or to add to the Bible any new rule for us to obey. In his letter to the Colossians, St. Paul makes this point abundantly plain. He wrote, *Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.*

Those words are, I believe, literally inspired by the Holy Ghost and they are strictly in line with what St. Paul knew of Christ's life on earth. One of the gravest charges levied against Our Lord was this—that He was too fond of joining in the pleasures of the people. John, they said, came neither eating nor drinking; but Jesus broke the Sabbath and attended dinner parties. He was in consequence regarded as a winebibber and a publican, and a friend of sinners. If, then, a rising generation, today, has to fight a battle for liberty of amusements, then in so far as the battle is for happiness—for real happiness—Christ fought it first. He loved the children, playing in the market place, and they, with their shrill "Hallelujahs," loved Him in return.

In Christ, then, we are entitled to have the best

of good times. And if you wish to play any particular game, or to engage in any particular hobby, there is nothing in the Bible to prevent you so doing. Of all the trees in the garden, we may freely eat—of all save one alone—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is just that one small reservation which reveals the follower of Christ.

Some of our perplexities over pleasure would disappear if we would realise that—in the words of the Preacher—there is *a time to every purpose under heaven.* Indeed, he says expressly that there is *a time to laugh* and *a time to dance.* Nowhere in the Bible is it declared that dancing is wrong. On the contrary, we read that, after the victory of the Israelites over the Egyptians, Miriam, the sister of Moses, led the women in their dances. Indeed, it is characteristic of the father's wisdom that when the prodigal returned from a far country, he did not welcome the man with a religious service, but with music and dancing. He showed this young man that he need not get into bad company in order to enjoy himself. Yet pleasure is the most delicately adjusted of all pieties. Even when his children were feasting together in a brother's house, Job prayed lest they offend God in their hearts.

Even the fashions are discussed in the Bible. At Philippi, it was a seller of purple called Lydia who helped Paul to start a Christian church. And why not? It was the noble matron in Proverbs who

clad her maidens in scarlet. In such matters, even St. Paul insists on no more than the standard of good taste which is recognised in all the best society, the wide world over. He asks that *women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array.* In other words, he condemned those exaggerations of fashion which seem so absurd to any future generation that looks back on them.

Jewellery, like the bracelets which were a pledge to Rebekah of Isaac's love and loyalty, is praised in the Bible. But fantastic jewellery is condemned. Isaiah gives us a vivid picture of decadence in the Jerusalem of his day—how the ladies were haughty and walked with stretched-forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go and making a tinkling with their feet. He tells of the chains and the earrings and the mirrors that they displayed, and he even mentions the little bags that they carried which he calls their "houses of the soul." Some may say that these are strangely trivial details to include in so solemn a book as the Bible. But the answer is that nothing can be regarded as trivial which absorbs the attention whether of a man or a woman created in the image of God. Hence, it is in the Bible that we read how Jezebel, the Queen, like Mary Queen of Scots, devoted her last moments before she was hurled into eternity, to painting her face and tiring her hair.

She had a religion. It was the worship of her own beauty. And to her religion, she was faithful even unto death.

In addressing "the daughters of Jerusalem," Isaiah pointed out that their paraphernalia cost money. Unless there is someone to pay the bills, you cannot have these *changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the vails.* And in a question which he puts into the mouth of God Himself, Isaiah asks, *What mean ye that ye grind the faces of the poor?* It is God, then, who audits what we spend on amusements and insists that we have no right to pleasures which involve the sacrifice of others' right to happiness. It is not the necessities of life which as a rule drive men to rob banks and accept bribes. It is the luxury, the display, the larger automobile, the expensive dinner, the best seat at a theatre, the clothes. In choosing our pleasures, we are thus free. But St. Paul tells us to *take heed lest by any means this liberty becomes a stumbling block to them that are weak.* If in our pleasures we *wound the weak conscience,* then we *sin against Christ.* And therefore, says St. Paul, *if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.* It is not your own happiness that should be the object but the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

After all, the pleasure which we derive from mundane things, can only be for a time. The day must come when, in the words of old Barzillai, we shall no longer taste what we eat or hear the voice of singing men and singing women. If we live long, we must grow old, and as the daughters of music are brought low, many who trusted in pleasure say bitterly of life, *Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.* Hence the insistence of Our Lord that the Kingdom of Heaven—the happiness that we can command—must be within us; happiness is not a cosmetic that can be applied or a limelight that can be directed to the countenance. It must radiate from the heart, outwards. Any artist will tell you that the most satisfying beauty originates beneath the surface. Such is the loveliness, even of a plain-featured mother as she bends over her child; or of a nurse, as she cares for the sick; or of a sister-of-mercy, as she prays to the Christ. To be wrapt in the service and contemplation of others than oneself is the true secret of happiness.

And if some followers of Christ seem sometimes to be indifferent to pleasure, even to legitimate pleasure, the reason is that they think, at any rate, that they have found a more fascinating occupation. It is because they have other things to do. Christ, as it were, took their common routine and changed it into a career. The question with these people is not whether this or that amusement is right or wrong, but whether it is worth while.

When their circumstances change, these people display an unexplained serenity of character, as if they were sure of an investment that can never depreciate in value. They have found a pearl of great price, worth all else put together. It is a treasure which neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor can thieves break through to steal it. As St. Paul grew older, he became richer, not poorer; and when at the last all men save St. Luke had forsaken him, he was still happy in that "heavenly kingdom" where was laid up for him "a crown of righteousness" that would never fade away. In the pursuit of happiness, St. Paul thus won the race. Narrow is the gate that leads into a life worth living, but he found it. And while the saints "in glory shine," so may we "feebly struggle" and thus share with them the supreme reward.

IX

CAN CHRISTIANS EARN A LIVING?

IT is sometimes hinted that preachers have a difficulty in preparing their sermons because in these days of doubt and enquiry they do not quite know what to preach about. For the preacher in search of a text, I would suggest, therefore, one topic of universal interest on which the Bible offers a fascinating field for research. Every day of our lives we are affected by the problem of industry, by capital and labour, by hours, wages and output, by finance and by import and export trade. And yet I do not remember hearing, either in church or out of it, one intelligent and comprehensive survey of what the Bible says on these subjects. Many years ago, I put together a few random remarks which had no importance save this—that they were delivered without alteration to brotherhoods of workingmen in the most Socialist areas of London and to the most Capitalist clubs and Churches of Philadelphia and Chicago. And in both cases, I was asked to repeat the discourse. Here then I found in the Bible an authority on profits and wages which was accepted at once by the man on the verge of Bolshevism and the man who pre-

sides over a bank. In the words of the Bible, you can say both to Capital and to Labour what neither Capital nor Labour will accept in any other words. For me to have said what I did say merely as a personal opinion would have been an impertinence.

One is told that one must no longer believe in the literal inspiration of the Bible, and especially of the Old Testament. Yet when I read the Old Testament, I find in the least expected places a number of texts of which every several letter, if obeyed, would have saved society billions of dollars, of sovereigns, of francs or of any other currency you like to select. Take this short and simple statement—*A false balance is* [*an*] *abomination to the Lord; but a just weight is His delight.* When the civic authorities applied that text to London, it was astounding to find what additions had to be made to the sacks in which coal was delivered, and what a scrapping there had to be of weights and measures! And if a false balance is an abomination unto the Lord, so is a false balance sheet. Not long ago, I walked up Broadway in New York. In buying a paper, I was so careless as to leave a quarter on the newsstand. For a whole block, I had proceeded when I felt a touch on the arm. It was the newsboy, holding in his hand a coin and saying, "There, sir, you gave me a quarter too much." That man was not far from the kingdom of heaven; and, thought I, if we expect honesty

among the poor and put cash-registers into our stores and restaurants, what is to be said of the rich, if their standards of honesty are any the less exact?

Take another of these billion-dollar verses—*Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.* That simple text, if obeyed as the Word of God, would have stopped every scandal that has ever arisen out of graft, bribery and corruption. There is scarcely a country in the world where the application of those rules would not mean a transformation. And yet sometimes we can find nothing better to do with the pulpit than to belittle the Old Testament as an obsolete collection of manuscripts, full of human errors and no longer to be read in churches or taken seriously on a weekday. If we could but see it, there are in the very Scriptures that we abandon, the phrases, on the adoption of which or the neglect depends the fate of empires.

On "usury," the Bible appears to speak with a double voice. In the Old Testament, it is condemned. But in the parable of the talents, Our Lord expressly authorises the collection of interest on invested capital. What the Bible does is to draw a clear line between profits and profiteering, between a natural return on wealth and extortion. And if that distinction were understood, say, in

India, the country would be transformed. The pendence of India on the West is due, mainly, to the fact that Indians themselves are unwilling to lend money to one another at less than thirty per cent interest, on which terms no material progress is possible. And the accumulation of jewels in a few palaces, with the custom of depositing one's savings not in banks but in bangles, together form a perfect illustration of the talent wrapped up in a napkin, of which talent there is also a stupendous example in the vaults of banks in the United States. What Wall Street is to do with its gold reserve is a question on which Christ had something to say two thousand years ago. The money should be *put to the exchangers.* It represents an opportunity for unparalleled service to the race. Where railways and houses and civilising merchandise are needed, here is the credit which can open the door to a fuller life. *For the Lord thy God blesseth thee, as He promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee.* True empire consists in genuine financial coöperation.

It was the view of Christ and of his nation that debts should be paid, as says the Sermon on the Mount, *to the uttermost farthing.* Hence, the profound sagacity displayed in the arrangement of a Year of Jubilee when such obligations should terminate. The principle of a fifty-year sinking fund

was thus laid down, and the abuse of a perpetual loan was avoided. There, indeed, you have not merely a billion-dollar text, but a billion-dollar chapter. If governments and states and cities had borrowed no more public money than they could repay with interest in fifty years, the saving of depreciation in securities would have been incalculable. Why is a sovereign, today, worth no more than a shilling, a few hundred years ago? One reason is that the wisdom of a jubilee, which automatically prevents inflation, has been seldom applied.

In these matters, supposed to be financial and economic rather than religious, the Bible has pointed the truth with the dead accuracy of a compass. Illustrations of this wisdom could be multiplied indefinitely; and one must suffice. There is still in the world the curious delusion that if a centre of industry sends goods to a consuming community in the same country, it is good trade, whereas if France sends goods into Germany, it is cut-throat competition. In the Bible, you may discover the true idea of foreign commerce. We read how Solomon, King of Israel, bought cedars of Lebanon from Hiram, King of Tyre, while Hiram, King of Tyre, received grain and oil from Solomon, King of Israel. In other words, commerce is not mutual injury; it is mutual exchange. If Tyre had not imported grain and oil, Israel could not have imported timber. It means that prosperity is

not a national but an international affair. If the temple of the Lord is to be in truth the joy of the whole earth, then the whole earth must contribute to its erection. Indeed, the Bible exposes the fallacy which underlies the suggestion that if a country imports more goods than it exports, there is "an adverse balance of trade." The prosperity of Solomon was measured, not by his exports, but by his imports, including ivory, apes and peacocks. And so was the prosperity of Babylon, as depicted by St. John. A nation, like a man, is rich when it can buy things in the open market.

It is not, I think, a matter for surprise that there should be so unerring an accuracy in the Scriptural treatment of industrial problems. For the founder of the Jewish people was himself a merchant and a farmer on a large scale. It was Melchizedek, not Abraham, who was the priest of Palestine. It was Melchizedek who gave Abraham his blessing. Abraham, like the other patriarchs, was a man engaged in business, and it was by his business that he reached God. In him, as in Job, we see that the rich man may also be righteous. Nor did Our Lord ever deny this. What He said was, not that it was wrong for a man to be rich, but that it was hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. A rich man can easily be honest; but for a rich man to be happy—that is difficult. Life, says Our Lord, does not consist in the abundance

of things that a man possesses, but in what he is himself.

In Abraham, then, we have the rich man who lived in simple style. When he entertained angels unawares, he did not summon his butler, but himself selected the calf, tender and good, which was to furnish the evening meal. His wife, Sarah, still prided herself on the quality of her cakes which she prepared with her own hands. It was Lot who insisted on a town house in Sodom, whose wife was turned to a pillar of salt when she lost her social position, whose daughters grew up devoid of the innate modesties of womanhood. In Lot, you see what Our Lord called the deceitfulness of riches. A little salt is good as savour. Even sarcasm has its uses. But a disappointed woman, ever regretting her past and cynical over her present, is an infliction.

In the Bible, then, we have cases of the small business which becomes the big business. That was true of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and it was also true of Lot. And the reason was that the businesses in question were meeting a genuine public need. These captains of industry served the public without seeking to conquer the public. When Abraham and Lot found the land too small for their herds, there was an excellent opportunity for a combine which would have set up a monopoly in agricultural produce. But Abraham followed an opposite policy. By separating from Lot, he acted

in the spirit of that great text which was the first of all anti-trust laws: *Cursed is he that addeth field to field until there be no place to dwell in.* He applied to his business the principle that he had to be faithful within it and think little of going beyond it. The best managed firms are today the firms where a direct personal responsibility is similarly maintained. Abraham had no difficulties with his workpeople. They knew him as a friend and, in battle, went on strike, not against him, but for him. In Abraham's large and well-ordered ranch, you see those excellent relations between Capital and Labour, between master and servant, which St. Paul so well defines in his letters to Ephesus and Colosse.

It is in the Bible that you find the first and the most drastic denunciations of the sweating system. Like the rest of what we suppose to be the ideals of the New Testament, these startling exposures of those who grind the faces of the poor are to be found equally in the pre-Christian Scriptures. It was, perhaps, St. James who summed up in fiercest language the wrath of God against the bad employer. *Behold,* he wrote, *the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.* On the right of the workman to enjoy the fruits of his toil, the Bible is insistent. The very expression is derived from its pages.

And the dignity of labour is constantly set forth. We read of the conquered Gibeonites who were told by Joshua that they must be forever the hewers of wood and drawers of water for the Israelites. And then came Christ Who Himself was a Carpenter, hewing wood, and Himself drew water with which to wash His disciples' feet. In Peter, the fisherman and in Paul, the tentmaker, He found His chief apostles. And the Gibeonite, or common labourer, found an Elder Brother in the Son of God.

That Labour should combine for good purposes, He desired. *Bear ye one another's burdens,* said He, *and so fulfil the law of Christ.* The strong ought to help the weak, so were the disciples taught; and thus was first established that principle which has since been elaborated in insurance against all the uncertainties of life and health and property. The whole of this vast financial machinery is no more than a social obedience to one or two billion dollar texts in the Bible. And it was in communities alone where the Bible is read that such insurance developed. On the other hand, any combination of labour or of capital which restricts output has been vetoed in the Bible. Again, one quotes a billion-dollar text—*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.* It is Scripture, then, that cures the slacker.

But the employer, on his side, should be careful also to walk humbly with his God. It was amid a

strike of bricklayers in the land of Egypt that the Jews were welded into a chosen people. Genuine industrial grievances are a cry that reaches the ear of Jehovah Himself and no Christian should allow such grievances to continue. But about that historic revolt of organised labour, which was led to victory by Moses, there are, perhaps, two observations to be made. First, the mere strike, successful though it was in the spoliation of the Egyptians, did not bring the labour unions into the promised land. In fact, the very wealth of which they had despoiled their employers, became an object—as in Moscow today—of mammon-worship among themselves. And it was not until they had received the ten commandments and made sacrifices for a common worship of God in the tabernacle, that they were fit to enjoy the milk and honey which had seemed to be so easily within their reach.

Also, that one and only strike recorded in Scripture was, curiously, not against a private employer at all, but against a system of state socialism represented by Pharaoh, or as in Britain we say, the Crown. Faced by famine, Joseph had nationalised the food supply of Egypt and, with it, much other property, previously held by the individual citizen. That he had strong reason to play the part of a Hoover is certain, but in Egypt, as in Russia, this communism in due course led to tyranny, and especially to a suppression of the right to worship

God. The Jews never forgot the lesson. That every family should have its own vine and its own figtree was a basic principle of their economic policy. Their revenues were limited strictly to a tithe or tenth of the national income. And the remaining nine-tenths was left to the sole enjoyment of the individual.

There is no especial characteristic of industrial reform, the seed of which was not planted in men's minds by the Bible. If, today, we fence machinery in order to prevent accidents, so did the Jew, thousands of years ago, ordain that every roof must have its parapet, also to prevent accidents. And when Labour today asks for one clear day of rest in seven and a reasonable annual holiday for every worker, Labour is unconsciously applying to modern industry the ancient and inspired calendar of the Jewish people, which also ordained one day rest in seven. And if social reformers have urged the wisdom and justice of pensions for the aged and of provision for widows and orphans, they are merely echoing the programme of men who wrote many centuries before Christ was born, who also pleaded for the orphan, the widow and the aged. There are many mystical aspects of the faith which I do not pretend to understand. But on questions of capital and labour and finance, I am supposed to be informed. And it has been from no textbook on economics other than the Bible that I have derived the clear and unanswerable axioms of commerce

upon which every banker, every manufacturer, every merchant, every retailer, and every wage-earner must base his daily conduct of affairs, if, in his calling and his service, he is, in common parlance, to make good.

X

DOES SCIENCE UPSET FAITH?

EVERY year, an increasing multitude of students, both men and women, proceed to college, where they are brought into contact with the latest results of science. Faced by a mass of new knowledge, which genius itself could not easily assimilate, these students ask the crude question—whether science and religion can be harmonized? Of actual life, such students have not had, as yet, any experience. In most cases, they have still to suffer the facts of pain and sorrow and disillusionment with which science, as they are taught it, is powerless to deal. It does not occur to them that the easy faith which seems to be enough for a 'Varsity boat race or a game in the Yale Bowl may fail under the severer tests of wealth and poverty, of temptation, marriage and the great uncertainties of flattery and neglect. In the drama which we call Life, these students are playing the first act; but in all drama, it is in the second, the third, or even the fourth act that the inner trend towards happiness or tragedy is made manifest. And society, today, is strewn with the wreckage of lives which began brightly enough,

but failed under the stiff stress of later experience. To these casualties, the scientific professors have contributed their full percentage of victims.

To suppose that students, as a class, are hankering after heresy is a mistake. If they declined to attend their appointed lectures, they would be refused their graduation. In this situation, therefore, the lecturer has the advantage. It is he who has force on his side. He can dictate. In his classroom, he is absolute monarch of all he surveys. And, as a rule, he is the last man in the world who should complain that he is denied a reasonable liberty of utterance. The greater the freedom, the greater, surely, is the responsibility. A lecturer, who advances rapidly-changing hypotheses as if they were ascertained truths, is guilty of intellectual fraud on his university. And if, by his tone and temper, he makes faith harder for his students—who at that very moment may need the help of Christ in their struggle between virtue and vice—he will not be held guiltless when he appears before the final judgment seat. It was Jesus, Himself, Who said of anyone who caused a child of His to stumble, that it *were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.* To undermine the beliefs of young men and women is a capital offence against the individual, the nation and the race. All honour to the many masters of

sound learning who decline to be party to any such enterprise.

On the other hand, it is not only in the colleges that young people sometimes have their faith upset. Whatever is unreal in the churches, they are quick to detect. And great offence has been caused by those who have urged upon the young what Christ never said. Take evolution. Nowhere in the Bible are we ever authorized to make evolution a test of Christ's love for the individual. On the contrary, Paul stated expressly—in words which I, for one, believe were literally inspired—that *neither things present nor things to come*—words which clearly include the discoveries and theories of science—*shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord.* Suppose that you saw a man drowning and, in order to save him, risked your life. Would you, as you gripped him, demand of him, before pulling him to shore, whether he believed in the indestructibility of matter or the dissipation of energy? And do you suppose that Christ, Who did not risk His life only but gave it for those who are in peril, would deny His great salvation to a man merely because that man believed—whether rightly or wrongly—in the writings of certain biologists and other scientists? If they who think this, had themselves suffered the agony of crucifixion, their view would be very different. It was for no geological correctitude that Christ submitted to the nails, the spear and the

thorns. To those, then, who would fetter my mind with restraints, whether scientific or theological—for it makes no difference which—I answer that I intend to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made me free, nor will I consent to be entangled again in the yoke of bondage.

The word "science" is merely a synonym for knowledge. And to be scientific is to *know*. It was the aim of Our Lord that we should have life and have it more abundantly. And as knowledge is a part of life, He wanted us to have that also. "See with your eyes," was His message; "hear with your ears; touch with your hands; touch even the leper; handle even the dead; there is nothing common or unclean; there is nothing hid that shall not be known; go ye into all the world; discover all nations; rend the veil of the Temple itself; *reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.* The keener the science and the firmer—so suggests Our Lord—is to be the faith. That also was the impulse of Paul. *Now,* he said, *we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.* Perfect knowledge was to be perfect love, for perfect knowledge is of God; and God is love.

It is the aim of the Bible, therefore, to enable us to know this world, past, present and future, so that we be no longer "infants crying in the night

and with no language but a cry," but grown men, grown women, who face the light and dare the truth. But as God loves the many and not merely the few, so is the Bible written, not for the few only, but for the many. Ninety-nine out of every hundred persons would be neglecting their plain duty if they were to spend their days endeavouring to master abstruse treatises on geology and mathematics and evolution. But these ninety-and-nine persons, none the less, have as much right as the hundredth to know by whom, how and when this world was created. What modern scientists tell in a whole library, the Book of Genesis tells in a chapter. And the Book of Genesis was telling it thousands of years before the modern scientist was born.

It is often said that the Bible is not to be trusted on questions of science because the people who wrote the Bible believed that the world was flat and that the sun and moon moved around the earth. Now it so happens that, to this day, we use, as a habit, such terms as sunrise, sunset and a level plain which, taken literally, contradict the teachings of Galileo. One can imagine some scholar, a generation or so hence, quoting these common expressions and proving conclusively that most of us still held to the obsolete notions; and especially our poets, who seldom if ever refer, as they should do, to a concave prairie or to dawn as a calm movement of a parallel of longitude from shadow to

shine of a fixed star. Some of the criticism of the Bible needs thus to be taken by the throat and laughed out of court. It simply means that the critics have no practical acquaintance with the way in which a mind gets itself into words. But assuming that the writers of Scripture *did* believe that the earth was flat and that the sun moved around it, does it not seem to be a little strange that they never said so in the sacred pages? To give one illustration: There was Job thundering forth his sombre meditations about the stars, about Arcturus, Orion and the Pleiades, but never once did he say that they moved round the world; and about the pillars of the earth, but never did he say that the earth was a plate. You may read into his poetry, if you like, the ancient limitations of his period. But you may also read into it, if you will, the knowledge of our own day. What he wrote was true to him, then; and to us also, it is still true. And that is one evidence of what has been called the inspiration of the Bible. Men wrote therein more grandly than they realized. They were like Handel, whose music was composed for a mere handful of singers and instruments but is only the more solemn-sounding when a vast chorus and a mighty orchestra render unto heaven the harmonious glories of its hallelujahs.

I am not an archæologist. But I am profoundly sceptical of arguments against the Bible, or anything else, which are based on the theory that,

compared with our own, former generations in a remote past were either barbarous or ignorant. That is not the impression when we break into the tombs of the ancients; and tombs are the least living element in any civilisation. The idea that a young lady toiling at a typewriter on the thirtieth floor of a skyscraper is of necessity more thoroughly equipped for speculating on the universe wherein she adjusts her hair and adorns her face than was Abraham, meditating at eventide in the door of his tent, does not convince one who compares the often delightful prattle of the young lady with the far-reaching affirmations of the patriarch. The notion that ours is a scientific era has to be adjusted to the observed phenomena of human life in cities and countryside.

Take an illustration: In the account of creation, we are told that there was a firmament. I have seen it argued that the Jewish writers looked upon the sky as some kind of concrete roof to which, as in the Grand Central Station of New York, stars are attached. Therefore it is held that the firmament was meant to be an enclosed space, from which it follows that Genesis is wrong and science is right. Here, primarily, I am not arguing for the Bible; I am arguing for honest scholarship. In Hebrew, the word firmament does not mean "an enclosed space"; it means "space without limit." To say otherwise is to say what is simply an erudite lie. And that the Jews did not live within a

horizon of concrete is shown by at least one passage—a passage of exquisite significance—in one of their greatest psalms, where we read: *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.* The idea here is an illimitable distance; yet not a distance that exceeds God. For again we read: *Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee.* The world of the Jew had indeed a remote frontier; but you did not reach that frontier until you reached the Creator Himself. It was He whose hand upheld the stars, and whose being brooded over all His works. The science and the scholarship that lack the reverence to see this are merely corroborating the wisdom of Jesus when He answered and said: *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.*

Let us suppose that, like Robinson Crusoe, you were to be cast upon a desert island alone, with one book for company, and that book the Bible. Lonely, you would have to face the unrelieved environment of nature. Night and day, storm and heat, the raging sea, the dread of beasts and reptiles, the stars—these would be your obsession. And if you were to remain sane, what would be the thought you would need? The answer is to be found, beyond cavil and beyond contradiction, in the first chapter of Genesis and only there. Give Robinson Crusoe that chapter and, an Adam amid

a world of animals, he remains upright—a living soul, his manhood inviolable. Give him *The Origin of Species* and I am not so sure. The *origin* of species was, after all, God. It was He Who, in the beginning, created the heavens and the earth. It is not in Darwin, however, but in Genesis where, most clearly, you find this truth. It is entirely possible for a scientist to look through his microscope and his telescope and to collate innumerable observations and yet to miss seeing God. Indeed, a scientist who depends solely on these aids to truth may, and often does, fail to find the biggest truth of all, *Verily, he is a God that hideth himself.* And as Job put it: *Canst thou by searching find out God?* The Creator is not discovered by our logic; He is discovered to our faith. As Jesus said to Peter: *Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee but my Father which is in heaven.* There is a proverb which asserts that you cannot see the wood for the trees; and this suggests science without revelation.

If our desert islander were to read through the first chapter of Genesis, would he be led astray as to the facts? I don't think so. He would learn, what has since been confirmed, that creation was not a single act but was an elaborate process which can be discussed, as our geologists now discuss it, in orderly periods. The period is called a day, but the day is never called twenty-four hours; on the contrary, we are expressly warned against any such

interpretation. A psalmist tells us that *a thousand years in God's sight are but as yesterday when it is past and as a watch in the night,* and he asserts this in a poem where he is considering how the mountains were brought forth and the earth was formed: *From everlasting to everlasting,* he cries, *thou art God.* Indeed, St. Peter is particular to emphasize this precise point. *Beloved,* he says, *be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.* Yet with this evidence of the Jewish mind—extending over the very centuries which yielded us the first chapter of Genesis—there are serious scholars and careless scientists who dismiss this immortal passage on the ground that the writer, with his profound vision of our universe, supposed all to have been improvised, let us say, between April first and April seventh, inclusive, B. C. 4004. He who wrote in the Spirit never said so and he was never meant to be so understood. As a matter of fact, the very word "period" which geologists themselves employ, means what is meant by day, namely, a circuit of time.

That creation was progressive and deliberate is thus at once the teaching of the Bible and the later discovery of modern science. And there is a meaning also in the phrase, so oft repeated in Genesis, that God looked and found that His work was good. There you see the Almighty as an Artist, standing back to survey His canvas and then ad-

ding a touch here, a touch there till all be perfect. As we build a house, so did He build the universe, not by machinery, but by will, by design, and our Robinson Crusoe on his desert island, hearing the reverberations of some hidden volcano, trembling at the surf which thunders around his home, like siege guns bombarding a fortress, is yet assured that a Personal Love arranged it, and that as a son of the eternal Father, He is remembered in his isolation; with the psalmist, he can say, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* Once more, I am not sure whether that truth would have been made so plain to him by Charles Darwin. Yet the truth means the difference, in such a case, between retaining a sane mind and lunacy. And Charles Darwin—what about him? Forty years ago, anybody who denied the infallibility of Charles Darwin was ridiculed by the whole hierarchy of science. But today, scientists themselves compare the theories of Darwin with the ideas of Lucretius. Science is thus a chamelion that can change its colours as change the fashions. It is, in the main, concerned with industrious correction of its own mistakes. Its theories of light vary as the rainbow. Its speculations on thought are driven, hither and thither, like clouds around a mountain.

I am told that I am not to believe in the literal inspiration of the Bible. And this. I am assured, is the decision of science. To be quite frank, I do not understand what is meant by this assertion.

I should have thought that if there were one quality more than another on which true science has insisted, it is the quality of exactitude. The microscope, the telescope, the chemist's scales, the seismograph—what are all these instruments except pointers to accuracy? And the only instrument that is not to be accurate, is the pen! Here, as a writer, one spends a whole life endeavouring to be precise in the use of words; and one is then told that, in the Bible, the precise word does not matter very much after all. Of theories, as of trees, we may say that by their fruits ye shall know them. Our bookshelves are piled up with sloppy literature, with the poetry that is neither music nor sense, with the story that neither begins nor ends, with the sentence that has lost its verb, with the trash, often the highbrow trash which is simply unreadable to anyone whose taste has been spoiled for other books by the incomparable grandeur of the Bible.

In the Bible, it is the exact phrase that *does* matter. It is not with ricketty tables and creaking chairs and ill-made bedsteads that your mind is furnished. The divine Carpenter knew how to use the tee-square and the slide-rule. And what He made was right. It was thorough. It was complete. And there is a tremendous lesson in the statement, so often made by American experts, that, after pouring billions of dollars into education, from which the Bible is excluded, the

result is often a mentality of fourteen years of age. Of no community where the Bible is thoroughly known has that ever had to be said. The real question is not whether Science and the Bible can be reconciled, but whether there can be any true Science *without* the Bible. The motion picture and the battlefield mean that Science, whether frivolous or diabolical, is today on trial. It is no longer Scripture that stands in the dock. We have seen what mankind becomes without Scripture.

To examine the story of Creation, verse by verse, is here impossible. I will, however, scrutinize one phrase—*And the evening and the morning were the first—or the second—or the third day.* Not, you will notice, *the morning and the evening,* which is our way of reckoning time. The Jewish universe, like the Jewish day, was born in the night. Creation was a process hidden from the eye of all save God. We see the result. We speculate about it. But we do not know; we cannot ever know. The past, like the future, is a divine mystery—and as we consider it, a hand is laid on our eyes and a still, small voice says to us: *Thus far shalt thou see and no further.*

What, then, the Book of Genesis gives to Robinson Crusoe on his island is a progressive creation culminating in man. It is plain, of course, that there are in these chapters two accounts of the matter, one after the other, and one of the curiosi-

ties of modern and scientific scholarship is the assertion that the accounts do not agree—whence, so it is argued, one of them must be wrong. In the first account, so we are assured, the world and the animals came first, and man afterwards. In the second account, man came first with Eden, and the animals coming later. Now, the men who compiled the Book of Genesis—whoever they were and whenever they lived—were not precisely fools. And only fools would have put into a book two narratives, one of which thus contradicts the other. The said compilers were not only men of intelligence, but they assumed intelligence in others who would read their pages. If scholars and scientists suppose that they must rid their minds of intelligence before they read the Bible, naturally they get into trouble.

In the second account of Creation, it never says that Adam was created before the animals nor that Eden was created after Adam. Nor is it implied. The story is told exactly as I have been recently writing a certain biography. I began with the main character. I then sketched his environment. And from time to time I introduced the people he met. This does not mean that the man was born before his environment, or that all his friends—his mother, for instance—were born after he was. All that it does mean is that, on the canvas, the central figure first attracts the eye. In the first account of Creation, the central figure is God and

it is from His standpoint, as it were, that the scene is surveyed. In the second account, the central figure is man, and we see creation as man has gradually discovered it—the country, its flora and its fauna—all without a name until man's lips framed a language. A more exact description of the essentials of creation, first from the Divine, and next from the human standpoint, has never been put upon paper, and never will be. But I must repeat—in reading it, you must use the brains which God has given you. And let not scientists and scholars suppose for a moment that they are any less stupid than the rest of us. There has been nothing in the annals of the human mind more crass in its stupidity than their attitude towards the first two chapters of Genesis. It has not been that the critics wanted truth. It has been, rather, that they did *not* want truth to include God.

Take this final point—the fact that man, as distinct from animals, became a living soul. For Robinson Crusoe on his island, that surely is a truth of capital importance. He may dwell amid the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fishes of the sea, but he is neither fish, nor bird, nor beast, but the temple of God's own breath and spirit. Between him and other creatures, there is thus a great gulf fixed and across that gulf no missing link has ever leapt. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that there was "an evolution" of species. At the arrival of the soul in man, the

evolution was interrupted. Just as Science is baffled by limitless time because limitless time ends in the God which Science cannot, or will not, discover; and just as Science is baffled by limitless space because limitless space ends in God which Science cannot, or will not, discover; so is Science baffled by the soul because the soul is of the God whom Science cannot, or will not, discover. And in revealing God as the goal of time and space and as the breath of the soul, the Book of Genesis has transcended Science as the picture on a canvas transcends the colours on the artist's palette. Science offers chemicals. It is faith that paints the sunrise. Science supplies ingredients. It is faith that illuminates the material in due proportion and unity. Science talks about species. It is faith that perceives the spirit. Great is Science; greater far is Omniscience. And in Omniscience was written the only Genesis of man and of the universe where he dwells.

XI

CAN THE HOME BE PRESERVED?

PERHAPS I may begin this difficult chapter by saying that I have just read of a church where the choir went on strike because the minister preached to his people against divorce. In a choir of thirty, the number of divorces had been seven; the leader himself, after divorce, had married a divorced woman; and a deacon, divorced three times, had married a fourth wife. So deeply was he hurt by the sermon that he found it hard still to attend the church. Yet it must be admitted, I think, that a minister, so situated, could only have dealt with so delicate a topic, under a compelling sense of duty. Had he withheld what Paul described as "the whole counsel of God," he would have been disloyal to Christ. And the mere fact that he gave pain does not mean that he was wrong. On the contrary, it suggests that he was right. When David sinned with Bathsheba, Nathan the prophet hurt him very much when he said, *Thou art the man.* And when Paul exposed the irregularities of the Church in Corinth, the Corinthians did not like it. And it was from experience, therefore, that the apostle warned Timothy of a time

when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. It was because they would not endure sound doctrine that their civilisation collapsed. And any civilisation which turns a deaf ear to sound doctrine is in danger of the same doom.

In these countries of ours, there are two kinds of people. First, there are those who ignore the Christ; secondly, there are those who obey Him. The fact that none of us can wholly ignore Him and that few of us have wholly obeyed Him does not obliterate the distinction. There is, today, as clearly as ever there was, a choice between accepting Jesus of Nazareth as King of kings, as Lord of lords, and rejecting Him. Between the way of Christ and our own way, we must decide. For this reason, Christ Himself, announced a definite distinction between the civil law of marriage and the rule of His Church. Legislating for an entire nation, Moses granted "a bill of divorcement." He so granted it because men's hearts were hard. And according to Christ Himself, Moses was justified. In other words, without Christ, we cannot attain unto the Christian life, which life includes Christian marriage and is itself enshrined in the Christian home. In France, where, substantially, secular science has triumphed over faith, the very word home is unknown and the race is deliberately committing suicide. In India, you have not the

home, but the zenana, and in Turkey, the harem. In the United States and the British Dominions, there are millions of real homes, where Christ is honoured and obeyed, but we also find that wealth, whether of mind or of money, tends to obscure the Christ. The home becomes less important. Instead of a continuous and normal residence in such homes, we find a resort to hotels, to apartments without nurseries and to exaggerated travel, sometimes to Europe, more often in the automobile. In periodicals which are supposed to be highbrow and circulate, therefore, among young men and maidens in college, and especially among those who wish to be thought intellectual—where it is noblest to be merely human—we read specious pleas for what, in plain terms, is nothing other than successive matrimony. Where Christ is belittled or eliminated from life, that must be the result. You may call it emancipation, if you like. But another word for it is decadence. And in the long run, it is the woman who will lose her heritage. Having given all to her husband, she will find herself in later years without security.

Where there is "hardness of heart" and a denial of Christ, "the bill of divorcement" is sometimes, as He said, the only alleviation. Indeed, it is to forestall such cases that the Apostle told us not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, and the Jews were constantly warned against marriage with pagans whose standards were different

from the law of Moses. Precisely what should be put into the bill of divorcement is a matter which Christ leaves to the conscience of the community. But where one party has openly deserted the other, or is insane, or in prison, or a drunkard, or a drug-addict, there appears to be clearly a case of what He called "hardness of heart," in which case the victim is entitled to relief. Nor is it in the power of any court, whether of divorce or of crime, to cut off the offender from the love of Christ. To the spiritual life of a Samaritan woman who had had five husbands, He devoted an especial attention; it was the spiritual life that she needed; but He did not hesitate to tell her that she was living with one who, in His sight, was not her husband. In helping the sinner, He did not condone the sin, and so far from eliminating the seventh Commandment from the Decalogue, He emphasized it, declaring in the Sermon on the Mount, that the command was broken in intent by a mere look.

But the best way of counteracting a false standard of marriage is, perhaps, to study the true standard. It is with good, not evil, that we can overcome evil. From the second best, let us turn to the best itself.

It is sometimes said that Jesus was not a scientist, but I have always found that "the Galilæan," as they called Him, had at His command whatever science he needed for His teaching or other public work. The terms in which He discussed, let us

say, the processes of our digestion were completely scientific, and it was as a scientist that He advised us over marriage. "In the beginning," said He of easy divorce, "it was not so." Not in any dogma of church or synagogue, not in any emotions of the respectable and the orthodox, did He discover the supreme sanction of marriage, but in the world-wide and unchallengeable realities of race. "Male and female," declared Christ, "created He them" —one man for one woman; one woman for one man; the cold, clean mathematical argument against plural marriages, whether they be simultaneous, as in the Orient, or successive, as some would desire to see them in the West. It was supreme sociology. It was the Word of God, quick and powerful as a two-edged sword, that cut the sophistries of selfishness to ribbons.

Nor was it in a world of fancy that this ideal was developed. The law was hammered on the anvil of experience. Some have doubted whether Samson could have slain a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass. But no one has questioned his ruin under the seductions of Delilah. Others have objected to the candor with which the Bible describes the scandals which stained the lives of patriarch and prophet and king in the Old Testament, but no one has supposed that the scandals themselves were invented. If Christ declared for a certain kind of marriage, it was because every other kind had been tried and had failed. The

course of true love may not always run smooth, but the course of false love *must* end in a shipwreck for somebody. When Abraham, in his old age, accepted Hagar, as sceond wife, there was unhappiness. When Jacob multiplied his marriages, there was unbrotherly intrigue. And Solomon could not be the good king that he wanted to be because he was a bad husband. All the arguments in favour of the marriage of mere impulse which we hear today were heard then. And what decided the matter was not the fact that easy marriage and easy divorce were looked upon as shameful, but the fact that they were incompatible with the greatest happiness of the greatest number. I am acquainted with a family in which the records of births, marriages and deaths have been kept for four centuries, and may now be studied in a printed volume. Hundreds of marriages are there set forth, but I doubt if there is one divorce. Of those marriages, in so far as I was able myself to observe those of later generations, nine out of ten were happy—obviously happy; and in the case of the tenth, it may be said without fear of contradiction that whatever trouble there was would have been accentuated if the union had been dissolved. I cannot think of one case in which divorce would have improved matters. The worst of the bad jobs was better than quitting it.

It is now generally admitted that, in advance of marriage, boys and girls should be told about them-

selves. They who say that a former policy of concealment was bad, are right. But, to me at any rate, it is strange that the very advocates of a wholesome frankness in these matters, should be so often the people who argue that the Bible cannot be inspired because it mentions the mysteries of sex. These critics close the Scriptures because they are shocked and then write books which, in so far as they are wise books, say the same as the Scriptures, only in other and often weaker words. There is no fact about oneself of which the diligent reader of the Bible can remain in ignorance. It is a book at once without prurience and without prudery. On the one hand, you have in the *Song of Songs* the very rapture of a genuine romance. And elsewhere you will find the utter shame of a guilty passion. Nor is the young man left in the slightest doubt as to the nemesis which follows an abuse of the simple laws which govern our race. The wages of sin, he is told, are death, and in the Book of Proverbs the perilous wiles of the strange woman are contrasted with the more abundant joy which is to be found in a true wife. For a generation that neglects the Bible, other instruction may be required. But if the Bible be read, it will be found a sufficient guide to the secrets of our being. It is not because the Bible has concealed these things that some of us fear the Book. On the contrary, it is because the Bible gives us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, which truth

strikes us as a dash of cod water. "Quicken me according unto thy word." The intimacies of wedlock, the gift of children and their natural nurture are fully explained and to these noble sincerities, some of which we are so foolish as to eliminate from our prayer books, Christ added His unchallengeable imprimatur. The idea that such phenomena of human life be left to the publicity of the theatre, the studio and the bookstall, and should be excluded from the Church and the Sunday school, was not His idea. The fact is that, in this candor as in other matters, we have not the courage, the audacity to attempt the imitation of Christ. The *Te Deum,* as rendered into the vulgar tongue, contains the glorious and resounding line—"Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb," every word authorised by the lips of Christ Himself, every word frank and open as we say we ought to be frank and open over such matters. But modernism will not have it. The advocates of a liberal religion, based upon science, are afraid of the blunt word, womb. It must be suppressed as impolite. And the heralds of evolution are the very people who think it rude to sing a great song about the birth of man. All the jargon about anthropology and ethnology and heredity and species falls flat on the ground before truth when truth is told in a phrase that a child can understand. The advocates of an enlightened faith dare not even pray for children in the marriage service and stagger at the

dreadful but strictly scientific word, procreation. Yet they will saturate their minds with the sensuality of novels and dramas which reek with the phenomena of immorality. It is only in church that they blush—not at the theatre—not at the opera—and certainly not over a book, other than the Bible. The mid-Victorian lady who wrapped cretonne around the legs of her pianoforte was a pioneer of the dawn compared with the obscurantists of our present intellectual caste. All that she said was that the mysteries of sex were too sacred to be revealed except in a shrine. But in the shrine, she faced life. And it was life unspoiled by an irreverent publicity.

Neither Our Lord nor the Apostle Paul offers us any particular advice as to whether we should marry or remain unmarried. Both the Master and His apostle recognise that a man and a woman may have to choose between the opportunity of marriage and the claims of a career or of public service. But the teaching of Christ is, however, insistent on the principle that if a marriage take place, the parties fully and frankly accept its whole responsibilities. The husband and wife are not mere companions; they become one flesh. Even if he leave his father and mother, a man must cleave unto his wife, and in loving his wife, a man loves himself. That love is no less sacred and compelling than the love of Christ for the Church, elsewhere described as His Bride. Marriage is thus second to no other Chris-

tian mystery in its tender holiness; it is an exquisite association of unlikes, man and woman giving and receiving, protecting and trusting, guiding and obeying one another, in a harmonious partnership of mutual honour and affection. Whether the marriage be arranged, as was Isaac's; or be a marriage of convenience, as was Ruth's; or be a love-match, as was Rachel's; is less important than the acceptance after marriage of its obligations. To establish a home, where life may be lived in health and honour, under one's own vine and figtree, that was the object of the two help-meets.

And the glory of the home was the presence of children. To be without sons, without daughters, has been to the Jew a poignant sorrow. And Christ Himself could think of no more terrible incident in a Jerusalem doomed to destruction, than this—that women would count themselves happy who had known nothing of motherhood. Here, on this planet, God has set the human race, and has invited us to multiply and to replenish the earth, which is even today only peopled by a small percentage, say one-twentieth, of the inhabitants who, if the resources of the world were wisely developed and justly distributed, could dwell here in peace, in plenty and in happiness. In our great cities, it is doubtless difficult to bring up children. Rents are high. A family is a formidable expense. But that is not God's doing. It is simply that our Jerusalems, like the old Jerusalem, are beleaguered. If

man wanted so to do, he could raise that seige and liberate that city.

Not that an avoidance of children is always due to the above conditions. It is often among the rich, rather than the poor, that the family is smaller than the census demands if the nation is to continue. Husbands and wives who have plenty of room for children, except in their hearts, and plenty of money, prefer artificial pleasures, the pride of social prominence—how empty it is, after all!—the excitement of continual change, to the steadying and beautifying task of rearing boys and girls in the image of God. It is literally a fact that, to the imagination thus perverted, there is more interest to be found in breeding a horse or a dog than in educating a child. The animal is preferred to the living soul; and we then ask why such marriages sometimes break down. Defy the laws of nature, and the breakdown is bound to come. We talk about reconciling religion with science. It is not religion that needs to be reconciled with science; it is fashion, it is selfishness, it is display of wealth, it is refusal of duty. These are the things that run counter to science, that provoke the diseases of affluence, that shatter nerves, that send multitudes to the hell which they profess to deny, though themselves they have made it. Unless these pretentious hypocrisies are corrected and there be a return to the old paths, the ruin which has overtaken much of Europe is certain to be visited upon

much of America. Establish the home—that is the inescapable task, if a nation is to continue.

It is a task that tests our courage and our patience. But, in the wisdom of Christ, we may avoid failure. Most of His life was lived at home. The eldest son in a large family, He served for many years as the breadwinner. It was this service that perfected His character. We, whose life consists of such service, are thus treading His path. Many a husband and many a wife have renewed their waning affection for one another by finding in Christ the cure for incompatibility. In each, He brings forth the best—controlling the temper, assuaging the worry, revealing occasions of happiness and sweetening the bitterest sorrow. The little foxes—said the Preacher—how they spoil the vines! Christ defends our vineyard against the petty inroads of irritating routine. Where a marriage has broken down, the result must be accepted, and none of us is so far without sin as to be authorised to cast a stone. But I know of no greater happiness than the memory of a marriage in which one was able to prevent the quarrel proceeding to extremes. That is the sacred function of Christ's Church and her ministry, whether lay or ordained. And in saving the threatened home, we preserve the nation.

Finally, be it said that half the marriages which fail ought not to have been solemnised in the first instance. Young people meet, are attracted to one

another, obtain a license and get themselves wed, without consulting the parents on either side, without any consideration of income and expenditure, without any provision for furnishing a home, and certainly without any recognition of the fact that marriage, like other affairs, should be "begun, continued and ended" in Christ. Most ministers of the Gospel insist upon a reverent, if often perfunctory, ritual of marriage but, from time to time, the entire ordinance is brought into contempt by some minister who is so false to the standards of Christ as to make of marriage a spectacular stunt, conducting the service in an aeroplane, or at the base of some statue or even, as part of a performance on the stage. I have come across a program of vaudeville in which one of the items was a marriage, repeated in one town after another, in which two of the artists were united by a local minister who, of course, received a handsome fee. Heaven knows that the local ministers were hard pressed for the money. But a resistance to such offers is fundamental to the faith. As for ministers who gabble the service—I have read of a case where three of them raced through it for a prize—they should remember that "the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." Such scandals bring discredit upon the Church and are particularly unfair to the main body of preachers who would not dream of so far forgetting what is due to the call of Christ.

To young people about to marry, the English *Mr. Punch* said, "*Don't!*" I cannot endorse that counsel. As the keenest flame is the lightning, so the noblest love is love at first sight. But, so loving, give yourselves the test of time. Wait a few months in order to be assured that it is really love which has overshadowed you. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Then, mistrust the heart until you have counted the beats. You lose nothing; you gain respect for yourselves and for each other. And when you marry, do it openly. Have no secrets. Start fair, as at Cana of Galilee. The ring is, I know, merely a matter of form. But it is, I think, a pity that it should not be the plain gold ring which is everywhere recognised as a symbol of the marriage bond. Marriage is not a fancy or a fashion. It is one of the eternal things in life, the same —just the same—yesterday, today and forever. As for the Protestant churches, they will be shattered beyond recovery if they leave to the Roman Church this task of maintaining marriage and insisting upon the duty of a parent. Here is the acid test of all that we have inherited from the Reformation. God grant that we do not flinch.

XII

WILL WARS EVER CEASE?

THERE are not a few people, today, who tell us that they cannot believe in Christ because the churches supported the World War. As Prince of Peace, they declare that Christ has failed and that His followers behave as if they knew it. When war breaks out, Christians on one side fight against Christians on the other, and each side is supported against the other by prayers to the same God of Battles. Until there be an end to these hypocritical inconsistencies—so say these observers—we will not believe. I will state, therefore, as clearly as I can, what I have found to be the teaching of the Bible and of Christ concerning war.

I begin by admitting, frankly and without reservation, that for every failure in loyalty to Christ, His followers should hang their heads in shame. When people who profess and call themselves Christians receive or offer a bribe, whether in industry or in politics, when they take to themselves what is more than is due and offer to others what is less than is due, there is committed one of those sins against the Holy Ghost of which Christ says that there is no forgiveness, either in this world or

the next. The grafter has thus to face the question—what shall it profit him if he does gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Into the city of God, there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie. And it is not a matter of small moment that the continent of Europe, to which the Gospel was first carried by Paul, accepted and then handed on to others, should be the continent where militarism has been most highly developed and most destructive in its results. How is this to be explained or condoned?

To begin with, we must be accurate in our statement of the facts. This Europe, where men "fought like beasts at Ephesus," was never Christian, except in name. Today, it is not even an ecclesiastical Europe. And not one person in ten spends ten minutes a day on the Bible. It was not the Churches that enlisted and equipped the armies; it was the statesmen. From the Churches, there arose a constant plea for brotherhood, a plea which we hear today, but the followers of Christ, many of whom were entirely faithful in their witness, were dismissed as emotional idealists. If you say that war is wrong, then it is as much your duty to stop it as it is the duty of a Christian. Our Lord did not come to cancel the conscience of mankind but to rally it against evil; and to his own conscience, each man, whatever his beliefs, is responsible. It is true that the ex-Kaiser is a Christian.

But it is a mere travesty of the Gospel that he preached, and the travesty merely served cleverer men than he as camouflage.

It was not religion that inspired Germany to war. It was the pride of an intellectual caste which believed that their own science and their own scholarship had superseded the Scriptures. They thought that they could offer the world an improvement on the Christian faith. What they did offer was an improved method of slaughter. In the mind of the East, where religions are reckoned by the mass, not by the individual, a war in Europe is simply a war in Christendom. But the more accurate student draws a distinction between the armies of General Ludendorff and the armies of General Booth. In a sense, Edith Cavell and Hindenburg are both of them included in the Church of Christ. But as Christ explained, that Church is like a net, cast into the sea, which gathers of every kind. And wise men, in their estimates, are careful to separate the good from the bad.

If armaments have been highly developed in Europe, the reason is simple. To Europe Christ offered a more abundant life, and in Him Europe achieved a vast emancipation of the mind. As the Light of the World shone forth, prejudices, superstitions and ignorance were dispelled; and there were discovered new uses of machinery and metals and other products. Use these things rightly and they are a blessing. Use them wrongly and they

are a curse. Let us suppose that a man goes into a hospital for an operation and is cured of his weakness. If he is a good man, he comes forth stronger in the service of society. But if he is a bad man, he comes forth stronger to injure society. The reason that we arrest criminals and put them in prison is not that they are ill in health, but because they are active and skillful; and if a husband maltreats his family, it is no kindness to them for a professor of physical culture to develop his muscles. The more fully we know about chemistry, the more in peril are we if the chemist is not a Christian. He takes a lump of coal and derives from it certain by-products. These may be applied to the manufacture of drugs that heal, of colours that beautify or of cosmetics and perfumes that charm. But by a trick of the laboratory, those same by-products may be used to develop a poison-gas, of which one drop on the human hand will slay the entire body. Science may be salvation; but it is often suicide; and the bigger the ship, the more important is it that it shall not be a battleship. Hence, as it seems to me, the folly of those who accept from Christ all that He has given the world of material enrichment while rejecting His divine claim to be Lord of All. The more abundant our blessings, the greater is our danger if they be abused.

Jesus Christ was born the Prince of Peace. But neither He, nor any of His disciples, ever said, or

thought that there would be a speedy end to war. On the contrary, Our Lord went so far as to insist that He came not to bring peace but a sword. Nation would rise against nation and brother would deliver brother to death. I will not here repeat what was written in *The Vision We Forget,* a former book of mine, of the amazing descriptions of a modern battlefield which St. John the Divine gives us in the Book of Revelation—descriptions in which artillery and bombs are plainly indicated. Christ had this foresight in Himself and He inspired it in others. To call Him an idealist is completely to understate His profound sagacity. Within Him was the sub-conscious memory of the creation of the universe and He understood, therefore, what His Apostles called "the patience of God." He proclaimed the Kingdom of Heaven. But He knew that it would take time for this kingdom to develop, like leaven, within the meal of the old world. The problem which puzzles us—how to apply the ideal to the real—was the problem which confronted Him. And He solved that problem.

The first question which Christ had to answer was whether or not His disciples were to withdraw from the world altogether. So cruel was the Roman Empire that this seemed to be almost the only solution. But Christ rejected it. It was no order of Eremites and ascetics that He founded. *Behold,* said He, *I send you forth as sheep among wolves.* And again, *I pray not that thou should'st*

take them out of the world but that thou should'st keep them from the evil. In other words, it was not in his choice of occupation that the follower of Christ would differ from other people, but in his character. Whatever calling was permitted by the law, he was entitled to pursue. So far as I am aware, there is no instance in the New Testament of any soldier abandoning the military life on his conversion. I am merely stating a fact when I say that of the soldiers who came to John the Baptist, no such surrender of their profession was demanded. The centurion who, at the Cross, saw in Christ the son of God, yet remained, so far as we know, a centurion. And while Cornelius of the Italian Legion became a Christian, he did not throw up his commission. In his hired house at Rome, St. Paul was chained to two soldiers, but there is no suggestion that he persuaded them to desert. And the Philippian jailor, who also would have been a soldier, was left in charge of the jail. In the Roman army, there was actually a Christian Legion of an especial gallantry, in which the soldiers were indeed martyred, but not because they refused to fight for the Emperor. About their fighting qualities, there was never a hint of doubt. And their offence was that they declined to worship the Emperor as a Deity.

The evidence is thus overwhelming that, from the first, it was held to be possible for a Christian to serve his country in a belligerent force. If the

profession of a soldier had been a criminal profession, it is unlikely that St. Paul would have written his famous description of the Christian armour. Doubtless his language was symbolic, but even in symbol, we do not talk of a Christian burglar or a Christian assassin. In armies and navies, there have been multitudes of men whose consecration to Christ was manifest, even on the battlefield itself. The part which a soldier has to play is often misunderstood. That he takes life is obviously the fact. But he also offers life, and *Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.* It is the soldier's readiness to sacrifice himself that brings him often so close to the Crucified. We look at the soldier's deed and say truly that it is dreadful. Christ looks at the soldier's heart and finds that the man is innocent of hatred.

So with the prayers for victory. Doubtless these prayers are often couched in language of a tribal patriotism. But here again, we need to look beneath the surface. Amid a storm, the sailor, who would never think of praying when he is ashore, falls on his knees and begs for safety. And so is it in time of war. If victory is demanded of the Almighty, it is because victory seems to be the only defence. When the French prayed for victory over the Germans and the Germans prayed for victory over France, both the French and the Germans were really praying for a common blessing,

namely a secure frontier. In war, the language of aggression is only the oxygen that stimulates. It is not the inner impulse. And these prayers for victory illustrate the deep wisdom of Christ's words, *No man cometh unto the Father but by me.* Without Christ, men may, and often do, pray for what they want. But without Christ, they cannot and do not pray as brethren, living together in a Father's home.

As long as armies and navies are recruited on the voluntary principle, no follower of Christ need enlist unless he so desires. A question of conscience does arise, however, when the state imposes a compulsory draft for naval or military service. Rather than serve under such compulsion, many men were imprisoned and some were shot during the late war. There is indeed a definite text on which members of the Society of Friends rely when they eliminate these professions from those which a Christian can consistently follow. *My kingdom,* said Our Lord, as He stood before Pilate, *is not of this world, else would my servants fight*—words which, if they stood alone, might be regarded as final. But the sentence, thus usually quoted, is not the whole sentence. It concludes with this—*lest I be delivered unto thee.* And that there be no doubt as to the importance of the addition, Christ went on to say, *Therefore they which delivered me unto thee have the greater sin.* In other words, His arrest was unresisted, and because they knew it

would be so, His accusers had the greater responsibility for ordering it. This passage, therefore, settles one definite question. It is not by the sword that the Christian faith must be propagated. And it is not by the sword that the Christian Church or the Christian cause must be defended. The crusade must depend not on force but on love and the wisdom which love inspires. This is the principle upon which missions are today conducted. And in their conduct, there is here, at any rate, a complete obedience to the will of Christ. If, then, there are young men, today, who have decided in advance that they cannot serve the state in any future war, their duty is plain. Let them submit, here and now, to Christ's alternative draft. It was not "an opinion" of war or of anything else to which Christ called us. It was service. And in dealing with conscientious objectors, the state was by no means so unfair as some have assumed. The Christian who served Christ wholly in some mission field, at home or abroad, was seldom, if ever, asked to slay. His service was too valuable to be lost. And if Christ were to be found in some city, as He was found in Capernaum, going about doing good, He would be asked to heal, to comfort, to forgive, but He would not be asked to bear arms. To the prospective objector, therefore, I say, "Serve as He served, and it will be the same with you. If you cannot conscientiously make the supreme sacrifice for Cæsar, it means that you cannot

conscientiously make anything less than the supreme sacrifice for God. Yours is a special call. You must leave your father, your mother, your wife and children, your lands and property, as the conscript soldier has to leave them, in order to obey it. Otherwise your conscience is not a master to be obeyed; it is an excuse."

The conscientious objector must become, then, the conscientious crusader. He must enlist in a new war, not against flesh and blood but to save flesh and blood. It is a war, not fought by some men against other men, but by all men against principalities and powers and the rulers of darkness. It is a war in which the Lord is still the Lord of Hosts, but the hosts are armed for the hospital, the college and the school, not the trench and the aeroplane. Jehovah is still the God of Battles but His battles are fought with despair and cynicism and disease. Still is the Almighty our strength which teacheth our fingers to fight, but the weapons held in those fingers are the X-ray, the lancet and the dressing for wounds. It is a fight for the life of others and the last enemy that we shall conquer is death.

With every disciple who so enlists in the war for life against death, there is less likelihood of a war for death against life. When an American philanthropist builds a hospital in Tokyo or Pekin, he establishes a fortress for peace. No oriental, healed in that hospital, can ever again

hate the nation which made the gift. Step by step, as Christ promised, love is thus fulfilling the law. But this does not mean that, during the period of transition, there shall be anarchy. On the contrary, it was in the Sermon on the Mount itself—that document which so many misquote and so few have read—that Christ took His stand for an inexorable enforcement of law, including even imprisonment for debt. *Verily I say unto thee,* He declared, *thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.* The Sermon on the Mount was not a gospel; it was the most exacting legal code ever issued by a legislative authority. *Be ye therefore perfect,* said He, *even as your Father in heaven is perfect.* The only circumstance that makes the Sermon on the Mount tolerable is this—that Christ died for the sins of us who come so far short of it.

Accurately interpreting Christ, as he always did, St. Paul emphasised the law as the foundation of society. And he spoke with respect of the magistrates who bear not the sword in vain—which, indeed, was written to the Christian actually residing in imperial Rome. In the New Testament, there is thus no warrant that I can discover, for the policy of refusing co-operation with the state in the maintenance of order and civil justice such as was practised in India by Mahatma Ghandi. On the contrary, Christ approved the payment of tribute to Cæsar, and as a Roman citizen, it was to Cæsar

that Paul, though a Jew, appealed. The personal virtues of Ghandi may recall the imitation of Christ but there is nothing of Christ's statesmanship in his boycott of the civil power. What Christ said to Rome was not that Roman roads and Roman baths and Roman laws were wrong, but that they were not enough. There were sick to be healed. There were blind whose eyes should be opened. There were children to be educated. It is so much easier to agitate grievances than to undertake the tasks that would remove them.

Between the use of force to preserve order in one nation and its use to preserve order in all nations, there is no distinction in ethics. And it was not Christ Who at any time, when He discussed the Jewish Scriptures, denounced the slaughter of the Amalekites, however terrible may have been that event. They who reserve all their sympathy for the Amalekites are guilty of a fundamental injustice. For centuries, the Jews had been subject to raids along their border, of an appalling ferocity. Men had been killed, women and children had been kidnapped. And the hideous practices of an idolatry that included human sacrifice were included in the fate reserved for the captives. If George Washington, if Abraham Lincoln, if Theodore Roosevelt and if Woodrow Wilson had been confronted by that situation, I doubt very much if their statesmanship would have differed from Samuel's. It was not an un-Christian act to stop the

piracy in the Mediterranean which was carried on by Algerians. Nor was it Christianity in Europe that preferred peace to the prevention of wide-spread massacre by the Turk. Until love prevails over all else in the world, there will be inevitably a legitimate use for organised force. And it is for the Christian, as citizen, as voter, as policeman, as judge, as soldier, as sailor, to use his influence, as he would in business or any other sphere of activity, for justice. Once recognise the principle that an army must fight for nothing save justice, and no army will ever fight again. For justice, when observed by all nations, can be applied to all nations by an impartial court. So with crime. The day will come when not a prison will stand, save as a memory.

In the proclamation of such a brotherhood among men, the Bible has been thousands of years in advance of the blue books. It was Isaiah who declared that the lion should lie down with the lamb, so seeing a league in which the large and the small nations would meet on terms of mutual respect and equality. I believe that Isaiah, when thus he wrote, was literally inspired by God Himself. If the world had so believed, there would have been no World War and twenty million lives would have been saved. But the scholars came along and politely disposed of Isaiah's divine authority; and naturally the statesmen in their turn were only too ready also to sweep him aside. As

Christ said, *If they will not believe Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one should rise from the dead.* It is, however, significant that the militarism in a nation varies directly as its ignorance of the Scriptures.

The three great armies in the world today are the French, the Russian and the Japanese. These armies are recruited by conscription in countries where the Bible is unknown to the mass of the people. But in the countries which have received the English Bible, there is not today one conscript army and the volunteer forces are best to be described as police. If the Bible were as honoured in Moscow and Sofia as it is in Wales or Ontario or Virginia, the problem of war would be settled.

For what Isaiah recognised was that the way to stop war is to use your munitions for some other purpose. *Turn,* he said, *your swords into plowshares and your spears into pruning hooks.* If we built all the railroads that need building, there would be no steel left for guns and battleships. If everybody had the healing that is needed, there would be no chemicals left for poison-gas. It is not the settlement of disputes alone that will stop war. It is the establishment of a new era when disputes will not be any longer thought worth while.

Take the late war. Lump together all that any nation hoped to gain by the disaster and you would not find that the whole lot meant as much to any several nation as, let us say, the recent cure for

diabetes. A little bit of territory, here or there, is important to this or that nation merely because we so think it. But the kingdom of happiness is within us. The frontiers of that kingdom are health, knowledge, virtue, friendship. And compared with these things, what men fight for is as dust in the balance.

XIII

DID CHRIST RISE FROM THE DEAD?

IF I were to write an overwhelming argument against the Resurrection, it would make no difference. Mankind would still refuse to believe that Christ is dead and that His Body, buried in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa was there corrupted, decayed to a skeleton of dry bones and became, finally, part of the dust of the earth. The Easter Greeting of old Russia, *Christ is Risen!* has suggested something to the world, which once suggested, is ineradicable. In China you may visit, silent and remote, the tomb of Confucius. Tell the Chinese that Confucius is not there, and they would be insulted. Go to Medina and deny the presence of the body of Mohammed and you will not escape alive. It is, indeed, the Mohammedan who guards with meticulous care the tombs of Abraham and of the other patriarchs who were laid to rest in the still preserved Cave of Machpelah. But ask a Mohammedan about Christ and he will answer that the sepulchre of Christ is empty, that Christ is alive, and even that Christ will return to Jerusalem, walking from the Mount of Olives on the edge of a sword. Somehow, Christ is different.

Indeed, it is often the people of no religion at all who convince me that Christ is still abroad in the world. Doubtless, He still encounters opponents, men and women who would rather be proud and rich and powerful in hell than poor in spirit and merciful, anywhere else; but the people I meet are not all like that. Let me give a few instances: I know a man—he is on a great newspaper—who thinks that all I believe is "rot" with an adjective, but is so ready to help others when they need help that I say to him: "You are not the pagan you pretend to be, and you know it. You are a latent Christian." Another of my friends on the press assures me that he is an atheist, but finds the Christian faith more beautiful than his own barren negations, and I say to him that he also is a latent Christian; at which he smiles like a benediction and I know that he is near to God. I was stopped in the street one day by a man I had never seen before who said he was a dealer in real estate and asked me into his office. "I believe in Bradlaugh and Ingersoll," he explained, "but I would rather believe in Christ"—and then this happened. Someone else entered the office, to whom it appeared that my friend had advanced eight hundred dollars in loans, quite unsecured, to help him over a hard place. The lender was himself a person of limited means and I told him also, that in assisting another who happened to be down on his luck, he was a latent Christian.

A British Ambassador at Washington once said to me that the surest way of making friends in the United States is to ask people to do you a service. They may not go to church; they may not believe the creeds; but within some secret shrine they cherish the Christ. They are latent Christians. I have seen much of the stores and the shops and the restaurants and the hotels on both sides of the sea, and have often asked for various services in many cities; and the cheerful courtesy, especially of the young, their readiness to take trouble for a stranger, their patience if the stranger does not quite understand, is constant and daily proof that never have the fields been whiter for Our Saviour's harvest than they are today.

What I have called latent Christianity is no new phenomenon. When the two disciples walked to Emmaus and a Stranger overtook them, they were latent Christians. Their hearts burned within them "but their eyes were holden that they should not know him." The disciples when they went a-fishing all night, were latent Christians, for the Christ on the shore seemed to them a Stranger and it was some time before they recognised Who He was and said, "It is the Lord." Mary Magdalene, when she could see in the risen Christ no more than a kindly gardener, was a latent Christian; and perhaps the real gardener was kindly and just the kind of person whose part Christ has always been ready to play. Christ is thus the one amongst us whom

we know not. There have been other great figures in the world—for instance, Buddha—but about none of them, today, have we this mystic sense of personal proximity. It is a Presence, as actual in the weak who are helped, as in the strong who help the weak. *Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, my little ones, ye did it unto me.* No one, save Christ, ever said anything like that.

There are some people who will have it that this latent Christianity is enough. And, assuredly, it is better to have a love that is latent than a love which is only on the surface. But if hypocrisy be a word that means wearing a mask; and it be hypocrisy to pretend to be better than you are, then it is also hypocrisy to pretend to be worse than you are; and a merely latent recognition of Christ is less than sincere. Hence, there are multitudes who—each in his own way—declare Him. They will not have it that He is no more than a spiritual influence, invisible to the eye. He is here, in the body. He can be described. He can be painted. His face can be sculptured. He has risen from the dead.

Again, let us take examples: There was a poor fellow in Gautemala who was led forth to be hanged. He held in his hand a small object which he gave to a passer-by. It proved to be some kind of a nut in the soft wood of which he had carved with an exquisite skill the face of Jesus in miniature, crowned with thorns, a face suffering and

sympathetic. To see that little masterpiece, tens of thousands in New York passed in a queue before the magnifying glass. If that criminal had kept to himself his adoration of the Saviour, nobody would ever have known and nobody would have been assisted by his evidence that in a desperate moment Christ had been his companion and his comfort. And what that man saw in Christ was not a spiritual interpretation of the Resurrection. That would have been as much a mockery as a spiritual interpretation of the chains on his wrists and the rope around his neck. To the condemned murderer, it was the resurrection of the body that mattered. What he saw on Christ's brow was the drops of blood. And when all is said and done, we are, every one of us, condemned to death, many of us to a painful death; and as we proceed to our inevitable fate, happy are we if we can hand to some passer-by our slight imitation of the Christ Who has made the prison-house a palace of the worth-while.

To show forth the Christ is becoming an impulse, wider than any church or creed. The other day, I met a producer of motion pictures who had been engaged on a film for the Salvation Army. "I didn't think it was fair," he said, "to show their work without showing the Person who inspired it. So I thought of a scene at the old Knickerbocker Hotel. Through a curtained door, the Christ appeared in silhouette, and when the door

was opened, it was not really the Christ but a Salvationist whose shadow looked like Christ because he was going about doing good." Here was a latent Christian who, in his calling as a producer of films, found it possible to reveal Jesus of Nazareth. Of what use would it have been to say to that man: "You have made a mistake. Christ only rose in a spiritual sense. You cannot photograph Him. That is contrary to the latest modernist teaching." What that man had to have was the Christ who could face the camera. And Christ knew it would be so. *Behold,* He said, *my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when He had thus spoken, He shewed them His hands and His feet.*

And here I will write with some frankness. I remember attending, one day, a conference of clergymen who passed a resolution in favour of prohibiting the exhibition of moving pictures on Sundays. It happened that, not long afterwards, I went to church on a Sunday morning. A most estimable preacher from a distance delivered an essay on good conduct and the service had this peculiarity—that the name of Christ was not mentioned, in any hymn, prayer or other exercise, until the benediction, which was pronounced in the usual form. The preacher, well equipped in modern scholarship, had just overlooked the fact that it was Christ who had died for the congregation;

indeed, Christ had, as it were, slipped his memory altogether. I then went to a moving-picture house. It was the Christmas season. The vast theatre was crowded with a reverent and enthusiastic gathering. Christmas carols were sung. The Babe, with His Virgin Mother, was shown. And the "Hallelujah Chorus" rang out, declaring the Incarnate Child to be "King of kings" and "Lord of lords"—this in a city where one-third of the people are Jews. Which of those edifices should have been closed on Sunday—the Church where the Christ was omitted or the theatre where the Christ was worshipped? Which was real—the Christ declared to the world or the Christ concealed by the Church?

We who have to earn a livelihood as reporters and actors and entertainers are no better than we should be. We are often the publicans and the sinners of modern civilisation. As bondservants of the community we never know where we may be sent, what we may have to do, or in what sudden temptation we may be involved. Let those cast a stone who have successfully withstood such tests. But there is one Person whom we know to be all that He claimed to be, and He is Christ. We meet His critics and interview them and we draw our own sometimes cynical conclusions. If some famous preachers could hear what the reporter says of them after he has jotted their latest views into his notebook and returned to his desk to write the

piece, they would lose not a little of the complacence which is ever induced by publicity.

In discussing the birth of Our Lord, I explained that this event fulfilled an ancient yearning, by no means confined to the Jews, but widespread among the peoples of the world. So was it with His triumph over death. The Egyptian was not satisfied to leave his body to decay. He has embalmed for us those mummies in which mortality seeks to be immortal. And it was from Egypt that the Israelites came. Hence, the Psalmist's plea: *Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* Deny that Christ rose from the dead and you are still left with that recorded aspiration and it would only mean that another Christ than He must come to satisfy our longings. In whatever way you read the Book of Jonah, this at least is plain, that he prayed for a life that would be stronger than death. *The waters,* he cried, *compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever; yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.*

Why is that passage so important? The reason is that, to our certain knowledge, Jesus of Nazareth pondered over it. We can put Him into the witness-box and hear His testimony. And we can establish beyond controversy the fact that He ex-

pected to rise from the dead and often said so. He told His disciples that *the sign of the prophet Jonah* would be the only sign granted to *an evil and adulterous generation* which did not want to believe. *As Jonas,* so He declared, *was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* Nor did this utterance by Our Lord stand alone. That He would be killed and rise again the third day was the burden of His later teaching. It was the final taunt of the people when He was dying on the Cross: *Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.* The very reason why the Jewish authorities sealed the tomb was their knowledge that "this deceiver" had pledged Himself that, within three days, He would leave it.

Faced by this prospect, the mind of mankind of that day was identical with the mind which we discern today. The disciples, who might have been expected to believe, were discouraged and sceptical and by their very piety suggested that Christ would stay dead. Hence the new tomb, hence the spices, and hence the astonishing circumstance that not one disciple was at the sepulchre (and some are not there today) to see the thing happen. Hence, moreover, the equally astonishing circumstance that the witnesses who *were* there, belonged to the Roman army which carried out His execution, and that the

seals on His tomb were affixed by the Jewish authorities who instituted His trial. A belief in the Resurrection was thus present in the world, the hostile world, days before it dawned upon the Church. And Peter, John and Thomas had to be summoned by the women and shown the empty tomb before they would credit the occurrence.

At a later date, the world discovered, not only that Christ risen was a fact, but that it was a very disturbing fact. And vested interests, thus alarmed, began to challenge the evidence. But never did His opponents attempt to find His body; never did they think it worth while to examine His tomb. All they did was, by bribery, to endow a negative scholarship which taught that His disciples stole Him away. In other words, their scepticism of Christ risen made them sceptical of the best and most honest men then living. Because they neglected His Deity, they also denied their own humanity. With Christ still dead, everyone else had his price. Today, nobody believes in that tale of fraud. By standing as witnesses of the Resurrection, the Apostles vindicated their own character. As Mary, the Mother of Our Lord, has been the noblest of all women through her courage as a witness to the Annunciation, so, in the epistles of Peter, you see what majesty illuminated men whom unbelief declared to be thieves and body-snatchers. Those stupendous documents are as overpowering as Christ's triumph over the

tomb. Try to write such another letter, and you will understand.

I do not know whether I am able to suggest to others how Christ rose from the dead, but in presenting the case to my own mind, I am wholly content to accept everything of knowledge which is offered by science. For that new knowledge, summed up, is precisely *nil*. Science has, indeed, discovered for us what "matter" is like and how "matter" behaves and even the possible construction of "matter"; but the answer of science to the ultimate question what "matter" is, can only be described as one hundred per cent. ignorance. Just as science has nothing to tell us of what lies behind the past, or of what lies before the future, or of what lies beyond distance, so science is silent when asked what lies within the uttermost atoms of our being.

Not long ago, I had the privilege of a conversation with Charles W. Eliot, for forty years President of Harvard University and a distinguished scholar and chemist. I pressed him to say whether, in his long life of ninety years, he had discovered or heard of any new knowledge of the nature of matter? His answer, as I understood it, was one word, "Nothing!" Here, then, is that fascinating phenomenon, a brick wall, and the physicists and the chemists and the philosophers, after running their heads against it, know no more of what it is than the bricklayer who handled the bricks and laid

on the incomprehensible mortar. We can pulverise those bricks and reduce them to dust and scrutinize each particle. We can declare that the particles are composed of atoms and that the atoms are compounded of electrons, but whether the brick be particles, atoms or electrons, makes no difference to this—that its secret is inviolable, belonging to God alone.

As with the bricks, so with those wonderful materials out of which God has built that body of ours wherein, as in a temple, is enshrined the soul. If we believe that God created the heavens and the earth, then we must perforce repeat the question which St. Paul put to King Agrippa: *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?* Why?

The body of Christ was in every sense a human body. In the sepulchre, it lay dead, an utter corpse. From that body, the soul had been wholly released. But over that body, as over the body of Lazarus, the God in Christ was absolute master. If He claimed His body, it was for a simple and sufficient reason. He had a further use for His body. And His body obeyed the summons. No hand was needed to unwrap the funeral cerements. When the body within them fled, they lay undisturbed. And no eye could see the body, save by His supreme will, yet when seen, when touched, the body was found to be no ghost but true flesh and blood. What, then, was the reason why Our Lord again

entered that torn and wounded shrine of His soul? It was the reason that led Him to be born of a Virgin Mother. It was, in one word—Love. For in His Resurrection, Jesus uplifted the race. The Christ, who could return to His dead body and arouse it to vitality, arresting the processes of corruption, and restoring its interrupted energies, is able to change *our* vile bodies, cleansing us from corruption and securing for us, at every stage of our existence, here and hereafter, that temple of the spirit which is suitable for the service that it will be our happiness to render unto the Almighty. This is what was meant by those who declared that we are *risen with Christ.* It is a resurrection that begins, here and now, and that never ends. Just as none, save He, could control His Body, even in death, so no one, save He, need control Our bodies, be it death or be it life. Whatever happens to our personality, He is able to guide us through the unknowable. As St. Paul expresses it, we shall never *be found naked* for *we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved*—as in cremation or in the fury of battle—*we have a building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* Or—in a sentence—*our mortality*—that which dies—*is swallowed up of life.*

Thus do we rise again, fully arrayed in the garments that we need. We are not to be disembodied; on the contrary, it is to be a resurrection of the body. But when we ask: *How are the dead*

raised up? and with what body do they come? St. Paul rebukes us sharply, answering: *Thou fool.* The death of this mortal body is merely the sowing of a seed; but the rise of the body immortal is the breaking forth of flower and fruit. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we are changed, from corruption to incorruption, from mortality to immortality, from dishonor to honor, from weakness to power. I believe in the resurrection of the body, and I also believe that the body, thus raised, is like unto the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus does He bridge the chasm between this life and the life hereafter across which mankind in all ages has vainly endeavored to leap. Where the Egyptians attempted to preserve their mortal bodies in immortal sepulchres; where the Chinese reverence the spirits of their departed ancestors; where the spiritualist seeks to see and to hear the body that shall be, and where the common people cherish strange stories of ghosts and apparitions for which, in their accumulated mass, there must be some scientific basis, Christ fulfilled even the superstitions of our race by wearing our nature on His throne. And from this it follows that, today, He is touched, not alone by a memory of those infirmities of ours which He shared with our race two thousand years ago, but by the very present sympathy of One Who is still, here and now, our Companion in sorrow and joy. The latent Christian is the man who is accompanied by the latent

Christ. And with Christ thus abroad in the world, the body which, with Him, we wear, is safe. If we die, He also died. If we watch another die, it is in the certain hope that what we have committed to the tomb or scattered to the winds—for it makes no difference—will be safe in His keeping. Death is robbed of its sting. Our home is not broken up. We remain forever our individual selves. And our individual selves are forever enshrined in that vehicle of service and of happiness which is best designed for the spheres, whatever they may be, where He invites us to dwell.

XIV

WILL CHRIST COME AGAIN?

I THINK I may fairly claim that in these pages there is no need for me to enter into the details of that difficult subject which we call prophecy. In a previous volume, *The Vision We Forget,* I have offered a layman's analysis of *The Book of Revelation,* and, whatever be the value of that book, nobody can say that I have been afraid of the topic. Anyone who wishes to pursue the matter can there find out what I think of the time, times and a half in Daniel, of the number of the beast, and of the four horses of the Apocalypse. And on the present occasion, what I have to do is to write for the person who goes to work in the morning and returns home in the evening; for the wife and mother; for the college boy and the college girl; and I have to answer their simple question what is meant by this Second Coming of Christ. I must confine the discussion to the few plain essentials. It must be a first lesson only in the mystery of the future.

If I am unable to dismiss prophecy from my faith, it is because Christ considered that prophecy was important. Evidently He wished us to under-

stand His plan of campaign. He did not want us to be taken by surprise, to fight His battles blindly, to run His race in blinkers; and for this reason, He took us into His confidence. *Henceforth,* He said, *I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.* In these prophecies, then, so often despised, so often wrested from their simple meaning, we are admitted into the cabinet council of the Almighty. We learn the innermost state secrets of the Eternal. It is a diplomacy, so open that it must be divine.

In their investigations of the past, the geologist and the antiquarian delves into the dust of centuries and expends millions of money. Why is the future less important? Let us suppose that there had been no prophecies. The critics of the faith would have urged that a fundamental speculation of mankind in all ages had been ignored by Him Who undertook to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And the criticism would have been just. Of what substance is faith unless faith can see through the curtains of time? I sometimes wonder whether they realize what they are saying who tell us that we should be guided wholly by science. What is it precisely that science tells us of the future? Let us examine it.

According to the strict conclusions of science, we may assume, I suppose, that the world must one

day come to an end. The moon is also a world but whatever life there may have been on the moon is now, so far as we can see, extinct. With every whiff of a volcano and every tremor of the seismograph, our planet is exhausting its primal heat. Whether the air that we breathe will be dispersed in space, and whether the earth on its ambit will lose impetus and be drawn by gravity, as by a link of elastic, into the sulphurous regions of the sun, who can say? But that the universe changes, however slowly, is certain. It is by a terminable lease that mankind occupies his speck of planetary dust. And there could not be, surely, a more saddening pessimism than this—which concludes the labours of mankind, the struggles, the sufferings, the hopes, the fears, in one final consummation of cold, of heat, or of asphyxiation. If this is to be our fate, and if the thermometer and the barometer are to be the new deities to be placated, then *let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.* Indeed, the foregoing is an understatement of the case. For it might be argued that while science certainly condemns the race to a final extinction, the individuals of the race, myriads of them, survive elsewhere, immortal. Let this speck of planetary dust exhaust its heats and dissipate its atmosphere. There are everlasting mansions prepared for those who desire them. But it is not science that tells of a future life. It is faith. And if science be really the sole teacher, we must assume not only that the race

perishes but that every individual in the race, as he or she dies, perishes also. Our bodies wear out. And our planet wears out. And the rest is annihilation.

Now, the statement that the Lord Jesus Christ, Very God of Very God, is returning to this planet in person at His own time, for His own purpose and in His own way, is a staggering challenge to the alternative of annihilation. To ultimate chaos, there is a choice—the ultimate Christ. His spirit is still in command of created matter. He holds the key of the prison-house. Be it next week; be it ten thousand years hence; be it in this Body or in that Body; Christ is coming—and, as Browning puts it, "all's well with the world."

Inevitably, then, there will be people who at times will gaze into the future. And sometimes these star-gazers will stumble over the next step. He who hazards the ascent of Mount Pisgah in order to survey the Promised Land, must be assured of a steady head. Along these dizzying precipices, many a spiritual sanity has been impaired. Yet the fact that Mount Pisgah has its perils does not mean that Mount Pisgah is merely a cloud on the horizon, rendered solid by an emotional mysticism. Nor is Mount Pisgah a hillock onto which weak-minded enthusiasts clamber, so imagining themselves on the summit of Mount Everest. To make a molehill out of a mountain is as unscientific as it is to make a mountain out of a molehill. It is

doubtless true that, in the Early Church, as in the Church of today, there were Christians who put a date, indeed an immediate date, to the return of Our Lord. But it is not by its small men that any movement has been or can be judged. The question is what the leaders taught the small men to believe. And about this teaching, I am unable myself to entertain a doubt. Our Lord expressly insisted that it was not for us to know the times and seasons; that His coming would seem to be delayed; that the love of many would wax cold; that while nation would rise against nation and there would be wars and rumors of war, the end would not be yet; and that His followers must not be misled by cries of "Lo, He is here," or "Lo, He is there."

Equally emphatic was St. Paul. In a letter to the Thessalonians he used words which were interpreted by that Church as meaning that Christ would immediately return; and without a moment of delay, St. Paul wrote a second letter to correct this unintended impression. Whatever may be our interpretation of the symbolism employed by St. John the Divine in the Apocalypse, it is at least certain that he foreshadowed a prolonged period of elaborated war, of revolution following revolution, of communication through the air, of an emancipated yet not always consecrated womanhood, and of a widely organised dissemination of the Scriptures. He expected a history that should differ wholly from his own environment—a history

only to be described in a language of simile, the truth of which has struck, as by a blow, the writers of Europe who have lived through the last decade.

The Apostles were not the simple-minded fools which sometimes we are apt to think them. If Peter or Paul were to visit some of our universities today, they would be well able to hold their own in conversation. And I am ready, if you wish, to close the Bible, and open the newspaper, and from the facts which we read at breakfast, deduce the certainty of Our Lord's return to reign. I will not dwell on that ethnological miracle, the continuance of the Jewish people, unique among all nations, which fulfils prediction. I will not here draw any conclusion from the simultaneous capture of Jerusalem, the fall of the Caliphate and the impact of new America on old Europe, which events appear to many people to bear a prophetic significance. I will be content with one simple illustration which the whole world understands, namely the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America.

For the purposes of this illustration, let us take it for granted that alcoholic liquor is an evil. Now, in this evil, society for a long period acquiesced. There was an unchallenged surrender to drink, and if the drunkard was noticed at all, it was merely as a jest. This was, then, the first era when everybody accepted an evil without even realising that it was evil. The conscience was asleep.

Next there arose certain personal abstainers from drink. They were only individuals and their influence—to quote Our Lord's simile—worked like leaven in a barrel of meal. We have a second era, of conscience aroused, but only in a minority.

Time passes and an ever-increasing number of persons disapprove of drink. And, at last, these persons form the main body of the nation. Conscience is now no longer in a minority, but in a majority; and this is the third era.

The conscience of the majority is next expressed in votes. The question of prohibiting liquor becomes a political issue. A law to that effect is carried and we have a fourth era—that of conscience legalised.

There is still a minority, however, which challenges the conscience of the community and persists in using alcoholic liquor And we have, therefore, to face a fifth era, namely, conscience enforced. When that era is concluded and conscience triumphs, we may fairly say that Our Lord's Prayer is answered and that God's will is done on earth as it is done in heaven.

The abatement of intemperance is but one example of betterment. What is true of drink is also true of slavery, of drugs, of graft, of crime, of gambling, of vice, of every thought and deed that degrades our race. In fact, it is true of the inner and inclusive malady which we call Sin. Behind the skirmishes on the surface of history, there lies

the profounder struggle between right and wrong, to be summarised as:

(1) Conscience asleep;
(2) Conscience awake in the minority;
(3) Conscience extended to the majority;
(4) Conscience expressed in law;
(5) Conscience, as law, enforced.

Now change the word Conscience to Christ and we have the story of our faith. Here it is:

(1) Christ not yet born;
(2) Christ obeyed by the few;
(3) Christ accepted by the many;
(4) Christ expressed in law;
(5) The law of Christ enforced.

We have thus five eras of conflict and victory. In the first era, evil was not effectively challenged. That was the situation before the birth of Christ and it is still the situation in any land or in any community where Christ is unknown or ignored. Over wide areas of India, of China, of Africa, evil is still simply accepted as necessary.

When Christ came, the second era began. There was a protest against evil by individuals. And taking the world as a whole, we are still living in that second era. The disciple of Jesus, say in Russia, is still the exception and not the rule. He is a light in the darkness and a city set on a hill that cannot be hid. And nearer home than Russia, it cannot be yet said that nations as nations have accepted the obedience of Christ.

Still there are signs, here and there, that the third era of movement towards organised reform, is developing. To many specific evils, the law, however imperfectly enforced, is now opposed. And to an increasing extent, Christ has public opinion on His side. Society seems to be preparing for a fourth era when there shall be a definite effort to suppress known evil, and in particular to stop that evil of all evils, namely, war. There is a League of Nations. There is advocacy of a League to Enforce Peace. There are negotiations for limiting armaments. The dawn of a better day seems to be breaking.

Now, these actual developments of society, with which we are all familiar, have never been described with such fascinating symbolism as in the Bible. It was Christ's own method—this of making hard things plain by parable and *without a parable spake he not unto them.* St. John the Divine in his *Revelation* followed the example of Christ and also spoke in parable. And if it had not been for what he wrote, I myself would never have arrived at an orderly conception of what history means. The course of events is a vast and a complicated medley of rumor and of fact. Here one is able to see the one comprehensive design.

We now talk about a League of Nations. St. John called it a thousand years of peace or a millenium. The thing that he prophesied is the thing

that Viscount Cecil and the late President Wilson and General Smuts have been trying to work out. Precisely what was meant by St. John when he wrote of a thousand years, I will not here discuss. Elsewhere, I have offered a view. Enough that he had the profound vision to see that a millenium, consisting of external peace among nations, however admirable it be in itself, would not last forever without challenge. In the fourth era, you prohibit war. But you have still to enforce the prohibition. Right may be at last enthroned but wrong is still strong enough to rebel.

Hence the millenium is followed by a last battle —precisely the kind of battle that the United States is having today over Prohibition, only on a vastly bigger scale. This is the Battle that St. John calls Armageddon—where, as it were, the Devil, breaking loose from his chain as Napoleon broke loose from Elba, meets his Waterloo. "The devil!"—you cry—"who in these days believes in the devil?" Well, it happened that as I was revising these pages, I picked up a current copy of *The Century Magazine.* It was by mere accident (or design) that I opened the magazine at a sentence by Alexander Meiklejohn, the former President of Amherst, who, I think, would hardly be described as a fundamentalist or conservative interpreter of the faith. Yet he says, "As for the devil, I am sure we need, and have a right to the truth which was expressed in terms of him." If good is a

person called God, then I can see no reason in logic why evil also should not be personal.

It is when we have won Armageddon that we begin to see the City of God rise eternal on her foundations of established truth and justice. We have the end of the fifth era when goodness is accepted, not because it needs any longer to be enforced but because at last people realise that in goodness alone can they expect to be happy. The rebel wrong is no longer organised. And individuals who perish in evil cannot now plead that they are compelled so to do by the system or by environment. On the contrary, the system or environment now makes it hard to go astray and easy to keep straight, and the man who prefers evil, is himself solely responsible for choosing it. In the interests of society, there comes a moment when such an offender against the public weal must expect to be excluded. When Christ has won His long fight for the race, an ultimate defiance by those who still refuse His authority, cannot be and will not be tolerated. Theirs is what St. John calls the second death. It is not the death of the body. It is the suicide of the soul. If they decide for darkness against light, they must find the darkness outside. It is not that Hell is imposed on them. They insist on having it.

Now, if there had been no Bible written at all, that great drama, with its five acts, would still have been the inevitable masterpiece of history. And

in that drama, Jesus of Nazareth dominates the stage. Who were the men that, in days of Babylon and Nineveh, proclaimed ideals which inspire the forward looking statesmen of the twentieth century? They were the prophets and heralds of the Messiah. Who were the men that, when He came, turned an old, bad world upside down? They were the witnesses of His resurrection. From which communities, today, originate the armies of light and healing and comfort? They are the communities where, however distantly, Christ is seen, and however imperfectly, Christ is served. And is it unreasonable to assume that He who has hitherto filled the stage of history will be seen not less clearly than hitherto in the days of His cumulative conquest over wrong? As the final acts are announced, is He suddenly to vacate the stage? As His army overwhelms every other force in the world, is the host to find itself without a Leader? Is Christ to be killed a second time or is He to be seen and worshipped a second time? To me, there can be only one answer to these questions, that He Who came once to save is coming again to rule.

Naturally I ask, as others have asked, how He will come and when? In such enquiries, there is no harm. If you expect a friend, you like to know whether he is to arrive by train, by car, by aeroplane or on foot. But if you cannot say for certain which way he will come, you can still make

sure that you have a room ready for him when he does arrive. They who anticipate a speedy return of Our Lord should be the most eager to combat social and personal evils of which, when He does return, He cannot but disapprove. The pre-millenarian who omits to make plain the pathway of His God should drop any further talk about a literally inspired Bible. It is the men and women that labour to put an end to the employment of children in factories and similar abuses, who are the true believers in the Second Coming of Christ. At any rate, they are the people who have convinced me.

That an event of stupendous significance is to be expected as history advances, seems obvious. The telephone, the telegraph, the photograph and the radio are only the preliminary efforts of science in the direction of what will be ultimately an universal sight and an universal hearing among mankind. Every deed done anywhere will be seen everywhere; and every word said anywhere will be audible everywhere; and one man will be able to speak to the entire race. The whole of this dumbfounding development has been achieved within the lifetime of men, still amongst us. It is as if, after thousands of year of racial slumber, we had been suddenly awakened to our senses.

They who dismiss as an idle tale the hope of Christ's Coming are thus confronted by events which seem to revive the significance of the prophe-

cies which had been so nearly abandoned. He will not come until His welcome is assured, but the sooner we assure that welcome, the happier will be the world wherein the Almighty has given us a home. He that yearns for the Christ will cleanse his own habits, will balance his own accounts, will pay his own just debts, will serve his neighbour as himself, will be, in one word—ready. Of every hope we have, this is the most practical. It means that we live, not in a sunset, but in a sunrise. We have the day ahead of us. We watch the dawn and glory in the great call to be His comrades. If we are to reign with Him, it means that, with Him, we are to love one another.

XV

IS THE TRINITY A MYTH?

AND thus do I come to the end of my task. To these pages, I would apply the rule that also applies to sermons and creeds and hymns, namely, that whatever fails to reveal the Christ should be forgotten. As the monasteries in the Middle Ages were tried by this test, so must the theological college and the clergy, there trained, be tried in our own day. It is not for me to say whether our sacred erudition is a shrine that displays the Christ or a sepulchre that entombs Him. No sepulchre and no shrine can hold Him any longer from the people. I hope that I am not intolerant of opinions other than my own. But let us realise this—intolerance is not confined to the orthodox. Torquemada was a model of tolerance compared with Robespierre or Lenin. All the more honour, then, to those who, disagreeing with this book, have read it for whatever good they may have found therein.

I have had to decide for myself, first, the broad question whether or not I am to have a religion at all? This question I cannot answer otherwise than in the affirmative. It happens that the religion

nearest to me is the religion of Christ and I know none other, at a distance, that I would be likely to prefer, if I had the opportunity of studying such an alternative at first hand. I therefore accept, in broad terms, the Christian religion. Within that religion, that which is nearest to me, physically, is a book, called the Bible, and it is with the Bible, therefore, that I begin my practice of the faith. If I were to be crippled and debarred from church, I could still read the Bible, and if I went blind, I could still hear the Bible; and if I also went deaf, I could still remember what I had heard and what I had read. It is, then, the Bible and the Christ Whom I find in the Bible that matter to me; He, and none other or less than He, is the life that I would like to live. From this, it follows that a ceremony or a theological term, however venerable or expressive it may be, is not a matter which I am under any necessity of defending or explaining unless I find it in the Bible. Much that people criticise in what they believe to be the Christian faith, is not yet in my faith, and never may be. Nor do I pause for an instant to dispute over words which have never been the words of the Bible. About terms like transubstantiation, pre-millenarianism, the immaculate conception, apostolic succession, paedo-baptism,—be they Catholic, be they Protestant—I say nothing, good or bad. The terms in which Our Lord and His Apostles made the faith so plain to men of their own day

are terms which would make the faith plain to us if we confined ourselves to the use of them. Unless a new word clarifies an old meaning or suggests a new meaning, it is not an improvement of language. And other things being equal, the longer the word, the worse is the literary style in which it is adopted.

It happens that I was reared in a Church which, however rigidly orthodox it may have been in belief, did not in fact make use of creed of catechism or confession. In this abstinence from formulas, which practice we shared with the Society of Friends, we thought, at any rate, that we were following the mind of the Master Who, in His dealings with the disciples, depended on personal contact. In the opinion of Napoleon, constitutions should be short and obscure, and among historians, it has always been a question how far constitutions should be written or unwritten. In the Nicene Creed and the Westminster Confession, multitudes have seen a safeguard of faith. Others, not less firm in the faith, have doubted whether any such formularies can be relied upon as a defence. When the war broke out, men trusted in walled cities, with forts around them. Within a month, it was found that no city could be thus defended and the conflict was transferred to the open field and the improvised trench. So with religion. The day when we could get inside a church and sit secure behind our creeds and articles of religion is over. Our innermost parlours are flooded by the

fresh air or the poison-gas, whichever way you regard it, of radio. For the Christian soldier, like the civil soldier, there is now required a new standard of courage. There, in No Man's Land, he is under fire and he must dig himself in. It takes time. It takes trouble. But it is worth while.

A simple illustration will, perhaps, make matters clear: We all know the definition in Euclid of a straight line as the shortest distance between any two points. That is an unquestioned dogma of mathematics. But to learn that dogma off by heart and to recite it like a parrot does not mean that you can draw a straight line. Only an artist can do that. So with the creeds. They are the geometry of life. But only a saint can live that life; and so to live, says St. Paul, is Christ. It is not by reading botany that the branch puts forth grapes. It is by belonging to the vine. Christ is the Vine, we are the branches, and without Him we can do nothing.

To refrain from the use of creeds is thus one thing; to deny the faith that the creeds express is quite another. It is, indeed, better to have the faith without the creed than to retain the creed without the faith. Just as a prayer is an offence to God when it is vainly repeated, so, as it seems to me, is a creed wrongly used unless it be sincerely recited. Anyway, I should not care myself to repeat any creed unless I believed it in the sense of the words, usually accepted, for it is the com-

mand of Christ that our "yea" should be "yea"; and our "nay," "nay"; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. No one could have been more particular than He over precision of language. He said that it was by our words we should be justified and by our words, condemned, and even for our idle words, we should be called into account. What a preacher is to do who has subscribed to articles of religion in which he finds that he no longer believes, yet who hesitates to abandon his adopted profession, it is not for any other than the man himself to say. It is a situation that has to be faced sometimes on newspapers as well as in churches. But in commercial life, a bargain ought to be a bargain and the courts do not allow the terms of a bargain to be interpreted in a symbolic or liberal sense by one of the parties. It is because I cannot honestly subscribe to various articles of religion which I do not find in the Bible that I have not joined a certain Church. I am unable to take the view that words, so solemnly inscribed and published, can be treated otherwise than I should treat the words in any other serious document.

There is one and only one theological term, therefore, unknown to Scripture, about which it is my intention here to say a word. I refer to the Trinity. It is true that the word "Trinity" was never used either by Our Lord or by His Apostles. But it is a word of special significance that appears in

the calendar of many Communions and has been used as the name of many ecclesiastical and collegiate edifices. The word is also suggested by the creeds, especially the creed of Athanasius, and it is implied, so at least it has been thought, in many texts of the Bible. For instance: you find the three Persons of the Trinity—the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost—in such a passage as this: *Father, into thy hand I commit my spirit.* And, of course, the usual benediction by which we are dismissed after public worship is a statement of the Triune God. Marriage also is solemnised under a similar assumption, and, in many hymns, the Trinity is declared. I think it frank, then, to say in explicit terms what the word "Trinity," or "Three-in-One" has meant for me as a key to a deeper thought and broader vision, as I hope, of the Unseen.

If I may speak frankly, I have been not a little astonished by the tone adopted towards this matter on the part of some preachers of credit and renown who claim a monopoly of the new knowledge. In dismissing the Trinity as a topic of no importance, these divines have evidently supposed that they were superior persons brushing aside the outworn dialectical "junk," if I may use such a word, of muddle-headed Hellenes in Asia Minor. My own impression of the scene is, I confess, not quite so flattering to the pulpit. I feel as if I were back at college, studying the higher mathematics and not

always following the rapid operations which proceed on the blackboard. Sometimes I failed to understand the transformation of symbols. But it never occurred to me, on that account, to get up and say that the professor, who did understand, was talking rubbish, which, in the interests of science, should be swept away. Some, at least, of our recent theology, as presented from the rostrum, has resembled the comments of a freshman who thinks everything must be a mistake which his own untrained mind cannot grasp. The acute intelligence of the Hellene in Asia Minor might well smile at the crudities of our comments on their explanation of God. I *hope* it is new knowledge. But much of it is, I am convinced, new ignorance. In materialism, we are indeed grown men and women, but in Christ, we are babes, who should be fed simply and regularly with the sincere milk of the Word.

I will put this question, then, to a test which every boy who sells a newspaper and every girl who answers a telephone can understand. Let us suppose that a magazine were to offer a prize to the person who should send in the best description of Light in one word. I will undertake to say that the money would go to the man who suggested the word Trinity. What is Light? It is what the French call a tricolor; it is red, blue and yellow, which are three, and yet it is one—it is thus three in one. I do not say that Athanasius was justified

in condemning those who do not, and will not, see so obvious a proposition to "perish everlastingly." But I do say that they must be very stupid persons. Nor do I wish to spend much time on the Athanasian Creed. My Master is not Athanasius, but Jesus of Nazareth. But I have been interested to take this creed, and with the change of scarcely a word, transform its clauses into a description of light. How does this read:

And the scientific conclusion is this:

That we see one light in three colours, and trinity in unity. Neither confounding the colours nor dividing the radiance. For there is one colour called red, another called blue; and another called yellow.

But the nature of the blue, the red and the yellow is all one; the glory equal, the majesty eternal. Such as the blue is, such is the red; and such the yellow. The red created; the blue created; and the yellow created.

The red not yet comprehended, the blue not yet comprehended and the yellow not yet comprehended.

The red eternal, the blue eternal, and the yellow eternal.

And yet they are not three eternals; but one eternal; not three incomprehensibles, nor three creations; but one creation, and one incomprehensible.

Now, what would you say of a sophomore who, after the severe strain of "a prom," brought half his mind into a classroom where the lecture was on optics; and weary of mental exertion, interrupted the professor with this complaint: "That's

all jargon and rot about there being three colours in light. What matters is the fact that we can see. And the rest is a superfluous physical formula." You would reply that the young man was a mental puppy whose eyes had yet to be opened. Yet I have myself received a letter from a student at one of the most famous theological seminaries stating in black and white that the friends there were not interested in the conservative reactions, or some such phrase, on theology. It is the attitude of the preoccupied sophomore.

Now let us suppose that you had another competition in which the prize was to go to the person who in one word gave the best description of a man —say William Ewart Gladstone. Here, again, I suggest that the money would have to be paid to the contributor who submitted this same word—Trinity. For Gladstone was the son of his father. But then he was also the father of his son. And not less was he the husband of his wife. A father is not a son. And a son is not a husband. And a husband is not a father. Yet the father, the son and the husband are not three persons, but one person—once more a triune individuality—the complete man. And in terms of William Ewart Gladstone, you again rewrite the Athanasian Creed.

I shall be asked—"Yes, but why worry about these subtleties?" and it is an entirely reasonable question. Why worry about Science? Why worry about the Einstein Theory? The difference be-

tween the natural scientist and the supernatural theologian is, after all, essentially this, that the scientist thinks it more important to know about what God has made than about the God who did the making, whereas the theologian puts a knowledge of God before all other knowledge. Between these attitudes of mind, you may take your choice.

The conception of a Triune God has been in history a matter of life and death. They who, today, abandon it are treading a well-beaten and tragic path. Already there are in the world at least two hundred million entirely sincere persons who have rejected the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, the Atonement and all similar ideas. They are called Mahommedans. And their God is apparently quite simple, namely, Allah, a Great God who is a Creator, a Judge, a Power, a Fate, a Destiny. God commands; man obeys, and that is the end of it. What an obvious solution! A perfect idolatry without the idol.

What has been the result? In the very regions where this simplified faith has predominated, we have seen in the Christian churches the most insistent loyalty to the ideal of a Triune God. Whatever may be thought of the Trinity in New York or London, there is no doubt at all about what men think of the Trinity in Tiflis and Baku. Christians there have seen and suffered from the appalling results of an incomplete knowledge of God's love. For what is it that Islam declares? There are two

dogmas, of which the first is that God commands; and the second is that man obeys. In other words, obedience must be merely human and authority alone is divine. It is thus power, and only power, that the Moslem worships; and to obtain power, he has used any and every means, however cruel. I am merely stating the literal truth when I say that a population larger than that of the United States has been sacrificed to the slaughter and enslavement inflicted over a wide area of the Old World by devotees of the prophet who accepted the limited view of the Deity. As with the Eastern worship of power, so with our Western worship of success. There is no distinction in essentials between the Sultan and his Khalifas who multiply jewels and luxuries and display them to the people, and the kings of politics and finance and commerce who multiply mansions and expensive pursuits. All this, whether in the East or in the West, arises out of the vision of a God Who is merely rich, merely omnipotent, merely glorious in majesty; out of the assumption, therefore, that a man succeeds when he is wealthy and fails when he is poor. The direct challenge to that false view of society is to be found in the doctrine of the Trinity. It is the very talisman of social justice.

When Athanasius declares that the Son is equal in Deity to the Father, what was it that he really proclaims? He asserts that to obey is as godlike as to command, that to be employed is as honour-

able as to be the employer, that to serve is as sacred a task as to be served. He deifies work. He takes the daily round and the common task and carries them clear through all obstacles into the very Being of the Godhead. If a Labour Party wants a charter, here it is—a Carpenter created the Universe. And because Father and Son are united in God, therefore Father and Son should be united on earth. All men are created equal, but all men should co-operate in the common pursuit of happiness.

The parallel between the Trinity in Light and the Trinity in God is, indeed, curiously exact. The Blue is of a sky, overhead, and suggests the Father. The Red is of the blood in our veins and suggests the Son. And the Yellow is a pervading colour, without which, artists say, no landscape is complete, an exquisite hint of the Spirit, the right Spirit which should be present in all we undertake. So with the man who was, at once, father, son and husband; to be a husband suggests neither command nor obedience, but companionship. It is not force alone that is divine. Persuasion is divine, love is divine, joy is divine, thought is divine, hope is divine. All these are the fruits of an adequate conception of God.

That men have wrangled and even fought over formulas is a phenomenon by no means confined to religion. We need, therefore, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. He also must be included in God. It is in a golden light that our landscape must be

seen. To omit the Spirit from the Trinity is an error only less serious than that of the Mohammedans who also omit the Son.

You may say that all this is poetry, but is poetry one of the things which, with religion, we are to obliterate? Is art, which is only noble in faith, also to go? Is music to be limited to the expression of that which science can discover and money can buy? If you eliminate what is hinted at in this book, what will be left of life? We shall have exchanged York Minster and St. Mark's, in Venice, for the mezzanine floor of a hotel where we only rise heavenward when we want to go to sleep.

When Our Lord came, He looked at the Jewish faith and said that it was no new faith that they needed but a fulfilment of the old. And that old faith, including the great Day of Atonement on which He died, He did fulfil. It is not a new gospel that we now need. It is obedience to the old Gospel. There is a vast volume of sin that should be confessed and forgiven. There is a vast reservoir of hope that is still deferred and makes the heart sick. There is a vast surplus of energy that has yet to be harnessed, like water-power, for the benefit of the community. What is everywhere needed is just this—a Christian. And what every Christian needs is to be a better Christian. The idea that a smaller Christ should be called in to save a bigger, richer, gayer and more learned civilisation is contrary to common-sense. What does

the Grand Central Railroad or the cotton-trade in Lancashire care for a mere rabbi who lived and died in Palestine, two thousand years ago?

But He was *not* a mere rabbi. The very hysteria of those who say it suggests that they protest too much. Christ has now entered into the sub-conscious mind of the human race. He is going about doing good. We doubt or deny Him and then He finds us when we least expect Him. Every road is, today, a road to Damascus. You can never tell who will be the next Saul of Tarsus. I am not worrying about the faith. How and when He shows Himself to men is Christ's business first; for me, to be "a living epistle" is, after all, to be no more than one of a million letters, mailed in life's post office. Yet—to quote an old story—they whose instinct it is to say "Christ is nowhere" may wake up one day to find in their theology a mis-print. And when, in their lives, they read, "Christ is *now here*," some of their difficulties will, doubtless, assume a different aspect.

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